



Negotiating the Divan

A study of the West-Eastern
Divan Orchestra
by Solveig Riiser

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(Daniel Barenboim with Schubert), Photo Glass 40 x 120 cm."

I'm very happy that you are studying this situation. The Divan is a very good example and there are not many projects like this. And the Divan is going to be 10 years old; it's history, really big history. Divan is like a small country, or a small republic, and everybody is learning so much. Personally I learn so many things in music, not only music but in normal life. As a person this project changed me so much. And I'm sure if you also practice this very well and get to know the members of the orchestra, it will change you too. It's a very good idea to study the Divan.

- Informant from the Divan Orchestra, summer 2008

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Preface and acknowledgements

The process of studying the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra has been a challenging, learning and exiting experience. Ever since I started researching this orchestra, the politically troubled situation in the Middle East has reminded me of the challenging environment in which the Divan exists. This month, the war between Israel and Hamas served as an ugly reminder of the difficulties and challenges in the Middle East. And, I must say, writing about peace, conciliation and new relationships between young Middle Eastern musicians has from time to time seemed not only paradoxical, but rather absurd. Still, I bear in mind my fieldwork with the orchestra in July/August 2008, where I experienced friendships, dialogue, development and negotiations. This complexity has made the research project I present here truly interesting - still challenging.

Many people have provided important contributions to this process, to whom I am eternally grateful. My greatest thanks goes to the musicians in the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra for including me in your lives and narratives. Thank you for openly sharing your thoughts and reflections on the orchestra. I wish to thank the Barenboim-Said foundation for allowing me to conduct fieldwork in Pílas, for your kindness and willingness to give me information, and for letting me work freely with the orchestra. A special thanks to Ana Juliá for your continuous kindness. A thank also to Daniel Barenboim, project manager Tabaré Perlas and all the teachers and assistants at the Divan workshop for letting me in on the rehearsals.

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Oslo, January 30, 2009

Solveig Riiser

1. Introduction

*The Divan Orchestra is a beacon of hope in a gloomy
landscape.
(Shlaim 2005)*

*Suddenly, classical music has become sexy. [...] Anyone who
has heard his [Daniel Barenboim's] extraordinary West-
Eastern Divan Orchestra, an ensemble made up of Arab
and Israeli musicians, cannot fail to be moved.
(The Observer, 2006)*

As a high-level orchestra consisting of young musicians from the Middle East led by world-known conductor Daniel Barenboim, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra has received much attention, symbolizing a hope for reconciliation and conflict transformation in the politically troubled area, through the means of music and discussion. The epigraph above stands as a hyperbolic example of how the media has presented and analyzed the orchestra based on its very existence; that the ideas behind this ensemble are indeed intriguing and fascinating, and carry with them the desire that we, as outsiders, have for peace in the politically troubled area of the Middle East.¹

Although the majority of the public's interest in the orchestra is focused on the fact that the orchestra consists of Israeli and Arab musicians, the dominant feature of this attention has functioned to give the orchestra's founder and conductor Daniel Barenboim a podium for expressing not only his music, but also his political and humanistic ideas in reference to the Middle East. Generally, little research has been done on the musicians' reception of the orchestra, and their role in achieving the aims of the group. During the summer of 2008 I did fieldwork with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra with a focus on letting the musicians express their narratives to me as a researcher. The result of the fieldwork is this thesis, which explores negotiations that take place in the West-Eastern Divan

¹ The article from *The Observer* is also referred to in the opening lines of Beckles Willson's forthcoming article (2009).

Orchestra in reference to the Middle East. My work focuses on two main issues: national identity and empowerment. However, before I engage in presenting the aim of the thesis, my methods and choices of focus, I wish to present a small narrative about the orchestra, with the aim of inspiring and contextualizing the discussion that follows.

Narrating the Divan

During the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra's concert in Oslo in August 2008 — a part of the group's annual European tour — I witnessed a situation that in many ways shows how the orchestra is characterized by at least two paradigms. The evening before the concert, I sat with some of the musicians outside their hotel and the conversation around the table was a truly informal and friendly one; the musicians asked me about Oslo, my city of residence ("Where should we go?", "What do you do in Oslo?" and "Is it always raining here?"). On my part, I asked them questions about the tour so far. In other words, we caught up from the last time we met, which was at the workshop in Pílas, Spain, where I had carried out fieldwork. While we were sitting there, a journalist from a Norwegian radio station came to ask the musicians some questions because she was going to introduce the orchestra over the radio on the day of their concert.² When the musicians saw the journalist they started laughing, saying, "Why all this media attention? Seriously, we are not that important! And surely not that interesting!" The reporter did not hear these comments, but when she started asking questions the musicians responded with excerpts from Wagner's opera *Die Walküre*, which was their main program for the year.

The journalist recorded the singing, showing her enthusiasm for what I believe she found to be an extraordinary moment. At the conclusion of the singing session the journalist started asking the musicians questions about their national backgrounds, their perception of the Divan Orchestra, the sort of discussions carried out between orchestra members, the music played by the orchestra and so forth. Throughout this, the musicians were laughing, answering the reporter alternately in a solemn and unserious manner.

² And, to make sure all details are disclosed, I must add that I agreed to be interviewed by the same radio station the day after, telling listeners about the orchestra and my impressions from the 2008 workshop.

Answering the question, “How is it to participate in the Divan Orchestra?” the musicians said passionately and simultaneously, “It is amaaaazing!” Their long, high-pitched ‘aaaa’ showing just how amazing they thought it was. This response was followed by a long laugh that made the journalist wonder how reliable the answer really was. However, it was quickly followed with a more serious response from one of the musicians: “Really, it is a wonderful project!”³ After a few minutes of interviewing the group, the reporter seemed satisfied and thanked the musicians for their help, then left. Immediately the conversation switched back to the informal, friendly one described previously, however, the musicians did indicate once again that they did not understand the reason for all the media attention.

The journalist later told me that she had also participated in the press conference held by Barenboim and the Barenboim-Said Foundation (the administrative head of the Divan Orchestra, hereafter referred to as ‘the Foundation’) and that she had asked Barenboim some questions regarding the orchestra. In the radio program the day after, her listeners heard the singing session and the musicians’ wild endorsements of their orchestra, followed by comments from Barenboim expressing the political and ideological basis for the orchestra. In other words, her listeners were granted a serious presentation of the orchestra by its conductor, a seriousness underlined by the youthful manner of the cheerful and passionate orchestra musicians. The journalist understood that the musicians were being mischievous and lighthearted. Nonetheless, what the radio listener did not hear was the true narratives and opinions of the orchestra’s musicians.

Research question

This study aims to investigate the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, (henceforth ‘the Divan’) through an exploratory research question, namely, “What kind of negotiations take place in the Divan in reference to the Middle East?”

This question will be investigated through two key concepts: (1) National

³ Another example is the following conversation between the journalist and a musician (NRK P2, 2008):

- *Journalist*: May I have your name?
- *Musician*: Yes, but then I’d have to kill you first [laughs].
- *Journalist*: Is that a common joke in the Divan?
- *Musician*: One of them.
Following, the musician gave his name to the journalist.

identity and (2) Empowerment. I have chosen these concepts because they are key to understanding the overall negotiations taking place in the Divan, and they both help to shed light on the variety and diversity of narratives and ideologies that constructs (or negotiates) the Divan Orchestra. Furthermore, as you will see in the following chapters, these are concepts that have direct links to the Middle East and can therefore inform the role of the Divan in reference to the Middle East.

Translated from Arabic, the term ‘Diwan’ can be understood as an ‘assemblage’ - of people as well as things. This is interesting information in the context of the Divan Orchestra, which is a complex system of constant interdependencies and binaries, and a collective where the background of the individuals differs a great deal. The diversity of the Divan assemblage presents several constraints as the scope of this project does not allow me to enter every aspect of the Divan Orchestra with the same level of detail. However, I have chosen to maintain a strong focus on the subjective narratives of the musicians as I believe this is an aspect that in the history of the Divan Orchestra should be emphasized to properly present the true complexity of the group. The amount of information I got during my fieldwork in 2008 was significant, and left me with no option but to limit myself to no more than two main fields of inquiry, namely national identity and empowerment.⁴ However, as indicated earlier, it is my aim to discuss these two foci in a way that sets the stage for discussions that range into more general issues about negotiations taking place in the Divan Orchestra in reference to the Middle East.

Analytic framework

The analytic framework I present here does not derive from one specific discourse or theory. Instead, through a broad interdisciplinary study I have drawn on different key concepts or terms in order to provide insight into the investigation of the Divan Orchestra. Throughout my thesis, I have chosen whatever paradigm necessary to explain what needs to be explained.

I wish to set the stage for an elevated debate on orchestras or projects of this

⁴ Additionally, my fieldwork findings could suggest a study of the musicians’ backgrounds, or of social organization within the Divan, of class and gender in the Divan and the Middle East, or a more substantial study of European art music and its role in the Middle East, or the role and ground policy of Spain and the Spanish government in creating the Foundation, or the complex paradox of several Divan musicians serving military duty in their home country while being a Divan member, among others.

nature, by offering methodological and theoretical tools that can help explore the role of music and verbal discussion in the negotiation of meanings, ideas and practices.⁵ My key terms are actors, negotiations, the Middle East, narratives, and power and identity in postcolonial studies and cultural studies.

Actors

Within the concepts of empowerment and national identity I have created a methodological separation of two actors related to the orchestra: (1) the orchestra musicians and (2) the founders and the Foundation. These are each considered, presented, discussed and juxtaposed. The choice of separating these two actors is a methodological tool for me as the writer and equally serves the reader to ensure clarity when reading the narratives that are juxtaposed in this thesis. However, I will also argue that there is a structural difference between these two actors. The objectives and principles of the Foundation (where Barenboim and Said's widow, Mariam Said, are both on the Board of Trustees) informs how the Foundation/founders/conductor as actors are to express the core ideas and values of the orchestra. Hence, it is unproblematic to deal with these parties as a homogenous actor. The second group of actors is not as easily defined. The narratives presented by the musicians vary and thus to characterize them as one homogeneous group (actor) would be to overstep their real diversity. In an attempt to resist over-generalizing the narratives of the musicians, I have presented the informants as individuals throughout my work.

By presenting a diversity of narratives, I attempt to explore and present the public's reception of the musicians as well as those musicians' ideas and experiences with the Divan. By this, I am trying to say something more general about the kinds of negotiations that are taking place in the orchestra in reference to the Middle East. The musicians as group/actor are only positioned thus, on the occasion that a sufficient variety of individual narratives are presented and

⁵ I wish here to remark that this choice is inspired by Feld's ethnographic work on the music of the Kaluli people of Bosavi, Papua New Guinea ([1982] 1990), which is an interesting example of an investigation on genesis and lived life, as both Keil and Feld call for. Through a broad interdisciplinary study (see Feld [1982] 1990: 225- 230) and an unveiling of the cultural mechanisms of the Kaluli people, Feld discovered structures of Kaluli sound that were symbolic cultural systems for the Kaluli people (Feld [1982] 1990). Hence, unveiling cultural mechanisms and how they are "meaningfully structured, produced, performed, and displayed by historically situated actors" (Feld [1994] 2005: 77) was absolutely necessary to understand musical structures and the social structures they were part of.

discussed. Furthermore, as we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, the musicians also negotiate the creation of a common Divan identity. This strengthens the image of the orchestra musicians as an actor, however this is not as immediate as the homogeneity of the former actor (the Foundation, conductor and the founders).

I have chosen to focus on the internal actors of the Divan Orchestra, leaving out the public relation and the discussion that this inspires. Although I do mention some newspaper articles written about the orchestra, I have chosen not to formalize the arena of public relations into a generic actor. I have done this for several reasons. Firstly, I wish to limit this thesis to the internal activity of the Divan, focusing on my findings from the fieldwork at the 2008 workshop. The scope of this thesis does not allow a coherent and comprehensive analysis of the media discourse on the Divan; moreover, the theoretical focus in this thesis does not require a discussion of this matter. Most importantly, I believe it is due time for the musicians' voices to be presented extensively. Therefore the narratives of the musicians and the group negotiations that take place internally, are the key focus and contribution of this thesis.

Negotiations

Based on my fieldwork and review of a wide range of theories, this study aims to present the reader with a broad picture of this well-known orchestra. The research question could be posed informally by simply asking, "What is it that actually goes on in the Divan?" Nevertheless, negotiation is included as a central aspect of my research question. Negotiation here refers to the direct and indirect conversation or discourse between the two groups of actors involved in this project. In a memorial article on Edward Said, Hylland Eriksen writes ((2003) my translation):

The orchestra's success has been spectacular, and through its tours it shows how conflicts can be solved. Not through fighting, not even through negotiations, but through common projects that create beauty and truth.

On the contrary, I believe that there are in fact negotiations taking place in the Divan Orchestra; an ongoing negotiation among all parties, both on individual and group levels. Given the broad variety of backgrounds and ideologies, and the diversity of narratives the musicians express, musical and verbal negotiation is necessary and indeed unavoidable if the Divan is to create and express what

Hylland Eriksen describes as “beauty and truth.” The following discussion is based on the belief that negotiations do take place in the orchestra, and focuses on the kind of negotiations that occur.

The term ‘negotiations’ is used in a variety of disciplines and in different ways according to the different fields of inquiry. However, in this thesis the concept of ‘negotiations’ refers to “opposing positions finding a space and/or mechanism for settling on a less opposing set of views,” or as the New Oxford American Dictionary defines it (2008: “Negotiations”): “Try to reach an agreement or compromise by discussion with others”.

I find the term useful as a methodological term for this thesis, which aims to show how the actors constantly exchanges ideas, experiences, political views and ideology. What is interesting in this setting, is that the negotiations not only take place through verbal “discussion with others” as New Oxford American Dictionary suggests, but also through the act of playing music. The way I use the term sees meaning as never being fully fixed, but rather constantly negotiated among the involved actors. Furthermore, my use of the term considers that negotiation takes place both through means of verbal discussion and/or through playing music together. In the context of the Divan and the Middle East, the term serves as an important reminder of the possibility of seeing the Divan as a conflict-transforming process, following the use of the term in the discourse of diplomacy and conflict studies (see, for example, Lederach 2003, 2005 and Urbain 2008). The term is also familiar in the context of contemporary identity discourse, as we know it from cultural studies and the disciplines it sponsors, where identity is not dealt with as fixed but rather constantly negotiable (for example see Biddle and Knights 2007).

The Middle East

“In reference to the Middle East” is the last part of my research question. This later part addresses how groups of actors see and understand the impact of the orchestra in the Middle Eastern conflict. However, it is important to underline that this does not mean that I will do a “reality check” on the role of the Divan in changing the political conditions and conflicts in the Middle East. Rather, it addresses the role the three actors play in changing or negotiating the mentality of

the Divan musicians, which may in turn have an impact on the political turmoil in the Middle East.

The history of the Middle East and forms of cultural signification of its constituent societies are important backdrops throughout my work and, as we will see in the next chapter, it is a central condition of the orchestra. A thorough and adequate presentation of Middle Eastern culture and history in political terms would be interesting for my readers, but even providing an overview of the politics, history and culture of the Middle East requires care, given the politically tense and truly complex situation in the region at present. The scope of this thesis does not allow me to present this background accordingly and because this has been done at length elsewhere (for example see Cleveland 2004, Yapp 1996, Owen 2000) I have decided not to include a chapter on the Middle East as such.

Narratives

I have already started using the term ‘narratives’. In this thesis the term refers to the individual, subjective stories the musicians bring to the Divan as a part of their identity. The significance of the orchestra members’ narratives in the context of the Divan is their lived experience as young musicians in the Middle East. Furthermore, ‘narratives’ also refers to the expression of music that the musicians — led by the conductor — perform as an orchestra. These narratives are central to what is expressed and negotiated in and through the Divan experience. In other words, the term ‘narratives’ refers to both the individual (closely connected to subjective identity and history) and to the Divan as a group.

As you will see later, Barenboim and Said argue that the Divan Orchestra allows these narratives to be expressed both through music and through verbal discussions (URL: <http://west-easterndivan.artists.warner.de/>). Based on this idea I have chosen to include the term in my analytic framework.

There is an increased recognition of the term ‘narrative’ among contemporary ethnographers. As Cortazzi indicates, “Narrative is now seen as one of the fundamental ways in which humans organize their understanding of the world” (Cortazzi 2001: 384). Or, as Crewe and Maruna put it (2006: 109):

The idea, building on traditions such as symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics and phenomenology, is that human life is essentially and fundamentally narrated and that understanding human interaction, therefore, requires some understanding of

these stories.

My use of the term is therefore not only informed by the ideas of Barenboim and Said, but also by modern ethnographic theory. Throughout my work, I aim to include first-person narratives (narrative ethnography) that allow my informants to express themselves through my thesis as clearly as they express themselves in the orchestra. Having carried out fieldwork with the group, I have a self-experienced Divan-narrative to tell; hence the term should be applied not only to my presentation of the informants but to my thesis as well. A narrative can, according to Cortazzi, not only be analyzed as text, but also as a social process or performance in action (Cortazzi 2001: 384). This is a positioning also taken by modern hermeneutic theory, which forms a central aspect of my methodological considerations (refer to Chapter 3 for more on this matter).

Power and identity in postcolonial studies and Cultural Studies

As already introduced, empowerment and national identity are the two concepts central to this thesis. Both terms refer to postcolonial theories and the field of cultural studies. Although the discussion is indeed a vast one, I wish here to present the way in which postcolonial studies and Cultural Studies each deal with empowerment and identity politics, paying attention to the way both traditions understand the movement between humanity, politics, and culture. The following explanation provides the foundation for my understanding of how music as culture informs society and politics, through notions of power and negotiations.

According to Ruud, identity is something we create through the narratives we tell about ourselves (Ruud 1997: 10). My use of the term ‘identity’ is informed by the citation from Ruud and derives from social anthropology as well as cultural studies and postcolonial studies. Drawing knowledge from these fields, my treatment of identity suggests that identity is free-floating; it is a process rather than a stabile object. Being a *process*, identity creation is an ongoing negotiation or transformation informed by what Ruud defines as four spaces; the personal, the social, time and space, and lastly the transpersonal (Ruud 1997).

Empowerment in this thesis is understood as “giving someone authority or power to do something” while also “making someone stronger and more confident in controlling their life and claiming their rights” (New Oxford American Dictionary 2008: “Empowerment”). Accordingly, the term has clear references to

the term ‘power’ and the struggles, dominations and relations therein. As I will present in Chapter 5, empowerment is also a *process* of ‘making’ or ‘giving’ power. I will present and juxtapose two ideas regarding processes of empowerment in the Divan, as defined by the two actors. Through this discussion we will find that defining the empowerment process is also a power struggle as such.

As a tradition that developed in the wake of Said’s influential work on Orientalism ([1978] 1994, see Chapter 2 in this thesis), postcolonial studies deal with cultural identities, differences and appropriation, and dilemmas of national identity.⁶ As post-structural theories, postcolonial studies focus on unequal relations of power and on multiple forms of power and domination (hence replace the Marxist emphasis on the primacy of economic relations of power, see Best and Kellner 1991: 24-25 and Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 6-7).⁷ Postcolonial studies “refuses to treat culture as an autonomous and politically innocent domain of social life,” Born and Hesmondhalgh argue (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 5). As a rich interdisciplinary tradition, postcolonial studies seek to enhance the importance of culture and knowledge in understanding power, and to enhance the conceptualization of cultural politics. In this sense, postcolonial studies challenge existing notions of empowerment through music. A new model for understanding the ways in which music represents and articulates sociocultural identities has emerged through postcolonial criticism. This new model proposes that music reflects nothing at all, instead it has a formative role in the construction, negotiation, and transformation of sociocultural identities (ibid: 31; see also Stokes 1994 and Frith 1996). This formative role occurs in a dialectic relationship with political, economic and cultural power relations.

Postcolonial studies acknowledge that music can both construct new

⁶ I want to mention that I am aware of the similarities and differences between postcolonial studies and post-structural theories. The latter pays attention to the production of the subject through language and systems of meaning and power, while embracing micropolitics as an authentic terrain for political struggle (Best and Kellner 1991: 24). As a tradition emerging in the aftermath of the 1968 political upheavals (ibid: 25), post-structuralism attacks existing notions of politics, power and domination.

⁷ However, critique on postcolonial studies has been that postcolonialism’s primary failure is its inability to account for the history and process of decolonization that, according to some, derive from its close affinity to post-structural theory (Gikandi in Lazarus 2004: 97, referring to Ahmad 1992; Dirlik 1994; and Bartolovich and Lazarus 2002). On the other hand, this claim has been rejected with arguments that a postcolonial study informed by post-structuralism provides a “powerful vista into the modern world system at its moment of crisis” (ibid: 98, referring to Bhabha 1994).

identities and reflect existing ones.⁸ As Born and Hesmondhalgh argue, sociocultural identities are not simply constructed in music, they are “prior” identities that are embodied dynamically in musical cultures that also allow for the reproduction of those identities (Born and Hesmondhalgh: 31-32, typography modified). It follows that postcolonial studies also allow for an understanding of the complexities of mobile, conflicting, and changing identities (ibid: 33). These aspects will be thoroughly dealt with in Chapter 4, which delves into theories of national identity.

It needs to be mentioned that my analysis of national identity in the Divan has clear connections to discourse originating in the field of Cultural Studies. Within this field, ‘identity politics’ have inscribed “cultural claims and sufferings as primary weapons of struggle, in ways that can as easily have reactionary as progressive outcomes” (Middleton 2003: 7). The power of music to create, establish and actualize the identity of a group and of individuals has been referred to several times in social analysis, both implicitly and explicitly. In the following pages of my thesis I intend to apply this analysis to the discussion of national identity. However it is possible to argue that a newer understanding of culture, understood as “the ordinary social, historical world of sense, of ‘symbolic’ or meaning-bearing activity in all its forms” (see Mulhern 2000: xiv) treats culture as a depoliticized field that has no interference with any terms of power or with fields where the actual power struggles take place. Despite being a common word in the field of Cultural Studies, ‘politics’ is not treated with positive connotations, instead it is the unspeakable, the “*p-word*” as Mulhern puts it (ibid: 150):

Politics is everywhere in Cultural Studies. The word appears on nearly every page of the corpus. Only ‘culture’ itself has greater salience in the general discourse of the subject. Truly commonplace in this respect, yet also predictably urgent in its stress, ‘politics’ functions in this quarter as an expletive. It is, in pragmatic effect, the *p-word*.

In my treatment of the Divan Orchestra I wish to give one example of how culture can be understood as a field of politics - a field informed by power domination and power struggles - by drawing on knowledge from Cultural Studies and postcolonial

⁸ It is critically important here to make a division between self-identity and the sociocultural identity of a group, which is also understood in relation to music. Several music ‘identities’ may inhabit the same individual. For example see Born and Hesmondhalgh (2000: 33) and Frith (1996).

studies. In order to do so, I wish to clarify one condition; namely how I understand the movement between humanity, culture and politics. As Mulhern informs (ibid: 174):

Culture is everything, in the sense that there is no social life outside formations of meaning, but it never adds up. Political practice seems to determine social relations as a whole – a whole more richly differentiated than the subtlest of programmes, which therefore, can never lucidly aspire to be everything. And in that necessary non-identity lies the very possibility of the activities, the interests, the perspectives that can meaningfully be distinguished as cultural politics.

Closely related to the citation above, Eagleton points out that the elevation of culture over politics is the opposite of the real movement in society, where it is political interests that usually govern cultural ones (Eagleton 2000: 7). The *humanity* in the necessity of identity creation, and the humanity of the identity politics that follows, are treated as the genesis of culture. Hence the movement from humanity to culture, and from this to politics. However, identity politics should also be understood in terms of the power structures that form hierarchies between groups (Hawkins 2002: 13). From the perspective of identity creation as both a human need *and* a political result, we should consider acknowledging a two-way movement between politics, culture and humanity. Hence we are acknowledging that at least parts of culture and the cultural struggle, are political. When Keil and Feld argue that cultural theorists need to fully investigate genesis and lived lives (Keil and Feld [1994] 2005: 20), they put forward a need to acknowledge the two-way movement between politics, culture and humanity, which in the end is what creates the framework of people's lived life and genesis.

Postcolonial studies, where both the construction of new identities and the embodiment of "prior" identities are considered, offer a way of examining this two-way movement. First, by dealing with the emergence of new identities through music, the movement from humanity to culture to power is taken into account. Furthermore, the movement from politics to culture to humanity receives the attention it deserves in postcolonial studies on "prior" identities. However, I wish to question whether Cultural Studies and postcolonial studies fully take into account all aspects of politics and empowerment in culture and music. Whereas Cultural Studies deal with cultural and social groupings and internal hierarchies

within a society, treating culture as meaning-bearing activity in all its forms, postcolonial studies (as a result of Said's work, among others) mainly deal with politically tense debates that reflect international hierarchies (applying postcolonial theories to the Divan Orchestra is an example of this). Hence, the idea that music reflects nothing but plays a formative role in construction, negotiation and transformation of cultural identities has been put forward (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 31). In addition, Middleton argues that culture is always defined in opposition to something else – be it economics, society, psychology, biology, nature (Middleton 2003: 4-5, referring to Kuper 1999: 14), whereas Born and Hesmondhalgh assert that there is a dialectic relationship between the act of musical communication on one hand, and political, economic, and cultural power relations on the other (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 5).

In this thesis I aim to take into account prior, embodied identities and the creation of new identities; the negotiation of what music is to reflect (if anything); and the power struggles or empowerment processes that define these negotiations. I will show how music can be defined in opposition to something else (in this respect I wish primarily to refer to the politics and situation in the Middle East), while being in a dialectic relationship with various notions of power. In other words, I wish to present a narrative that supports and applies those disciplines I have previously introduced, to ultimately present one example of a two-way movement between humanity, culture and politics.

Organization of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters in sum. The following chapter is a background chapter. To contextualize the forthcoming discussion, I will briefly introduce the reader to the Divan Orchestra and its founders Edward W. Said and Daniel Barenboim. Following that, I will provide a methodological presentation and discussion of the methodological choices and considerations that have formed the foundation of my research. Having done this, I will follow with two chapters revolving around national identity and empowerment, and will provide a concluding chapter.

I have two comments to make on the organization of the thesis. First, by structuring the thesis as presented, I intend to guide the reader into the complexity of the orchestra. In order to do so, I have both a background chapter and a chapter

presenting and discussing my methodological considerations for the research project. The second comment concerns a slightly problematic consequence of this way of organizing the thesis. I have written in the introduction that my primary focus lies on presenting the narratives of the musicians, however the reader will find that (aside from a few exceptions) the musicians' narratives are only fully included from Chapter 4 onward. Believing that the narratives become even more interesting following the background and methodological considerations, I chose to organize the thesis in this way, and ask the reader's patience in waiting for the direct musician narratives.

2. Background

*The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra is a humanitarian idea.
It became the most important thing in Edward Said's life,
as it still is in mine, and through it our ideals will always
live on.*
(Barenboim 2008: 181)

*I came here because I wanted to play, and at the same time
- if it's possible - to look for new options. I'm really fed up
with what politicians do, and I'm looking for reasons for
being more optimistic about reaching a solution.*
(Informant)

This chapter aims to contextualize the forthcoming discussion about the Divan Orchestra by introducing the reader to the orchestra and its founders. By doing this, I wish to introduce the reader to the complexity of the orchestra and offer an ideological background for its foundation. Before I enter into this discussion I wish to emphasize that I believe there are four key conditions for the existence of the Divan Orchestra; (1) music, (2) the politically tense situation in the Middle East (with clear connections to that which in the previous chapter was also named 'the politics'), (3) the core humanistic ideas and values as expressed by Barenboim and Said, and lastly (4) the nationality of the musicians.

The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra

In the early 1990s, a chance meeting between two men in a London hotel lobby led to an extraordinary friendship that has had both musical and political consequences. The late Palestinian-American scholar and critic Edward W. Said (1935-2003) and the Argentine-born Israeli Daniel Barenboim (1942-) should have been poles apart from each other. However they formed a friendship that has proven to the world that despite their backgrounds, conflict is not inevitable. Over the years, the two closely cooperated on several projects, among them the workshops of the Divan Orchestra, and as we can see from the above epigraph, both artists have named the Divan among their most important projects (for example see Barenboim 2008: 181). The orchestra was initiated in 1999 in

collaboration with Weimar European Culture Capital.⁹ The venue was Weimar, Germany, which, besides being the European Capital of Culture that year, is a city closely associated with Goethe.¹⁰ The orchestra was given its name from Goethe's "*West-östlicher Diwan*", a collection of poems based on his enthusiasm for Islam and inspired by the Persian poet Hafiz (Barenboim and Said 2002: 6-9). Barenboim and Said have expressed that the 1999 initiative was "quite a daring experiment" (ibid: 6), one that had them working with young musicians mostly between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, who were selected from the Middle Eastern countries of Israel, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt.¹¹ During preparations for the workshops (which took approximately two years) there was a question of whether Middle Eastern governments in some Arab countries would allow the students to attend (ibid: 7). In the end, all students did come and they participated in a three-week workshop.

Barenboim joined with the cellist Yo-Yo-Ma and other teachers to give master classes and individual lessons. Orchestra rehearsals were held twice a day - in the morning and in the afternoon - and were led by Barenboim. In the evenings, Said led debates about politics as well as music (ibid: 6-9). When Edward W. Said and Daniel Barenboim established the Divan Orchestra, they announced that this was anything but an alternative Middle Eastern peace process (ibid: 7). Rather, they gathered the young musicians in Weimar to "see what would happen if you brought these people together". Referring to the 1999 workshop, they emphasized the absence of politics in the program: "The one thing that didn't happen was straight out political fighting; there was an unwritten rule about that, at least so far as our evening discussions were concerned." (ibid: 8)

The argument surrounding the absence of a political presence has followed the orchestra ever since and has founded one of the ideas that in sum creates the previously mentioned conditions regarding the values of the orchestra (as

⁹ Definition of 'European Capital of Culture': "The European Capital of Culture is a city designated by the European Union for one year during which it is given a chance to showcase its cultural life and cultural development. A number of European cities have used the City of Culture year to transform their cultural base and, in doing so, the way in which they are viewed internationally" (URL: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_capital_of_culture).

¹⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was a German writer who lived most of his life in Weimar, Germany. 1999 was the year of the 250-year anniversary of Goethe's birth.

¹¹ The requirements in the 2008 Call for Applications says: "To be between 14 and 28 years old. Should the candidate be over or under the established age register, the Audition Board may consider his/her candidacy by taking into account the special circumstances concurring (occurring) in his/her case." (URL: <http://www.barenboim-said.org/index.php?id=190>)

presented by Said and Barenboim). Nonetheless, this ‘non-politics’ has been challenged several times.¹²

This was originally meant to be a one-off workshop as part of the events in Weimar in 1999. The founders expected approximately 20 applicants for the workshop, and were happily surprised when they found that more than 200 musicians applied. In the end, 78 musicians took part in the workshop (Riding 2006). Due to this enormous interest and success, the orchestra still gathers once a year in the Spanish town of Seville. Junta de Andalucía (Autonomous Government of Andalucía) and the Foundation (founded in 2003) support and organize these workshops. The orchestra has continued to meet every summer in Seville for intensive rehearsals and a concert tour, repeating the same kind of program as the one held at the 1999 workshop.

Said continued to lead discussions at the workshops until his health was too weak. After his death in 2003, Palestinian and Israeli intellectuals have been invited to continue the discussions that Said used to lead. In 2008, writers Elia Khoury and David Grossman were invited. The films “*Forget Baghdad*” and “*Since you left*” were screened at the film seminar, which was commentated on by Samir Jamal Aldin (the director of “*Forget Baghdad*”) and was chaired by the writer and professor Ella Shohat. Furthermore, the world-famous director Patrice Chéreau was invited to the session.¹³ Currently Said’s widow, Mariam Said, is in charge of the social program at the Divan workshops, leading the evening discussions and inviting prominent guests. She also ensures that auditions are held annually in Amman, Beirut, Cairo and Damascus (Beckles Willson 2007: 15). In 2008, auditions were carried out in Damascus, Beirut, Cairo, Amman, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Seville (URL: <http://www.barenboim-said.org/index.php?id=190>). Mariam Said receives great respect from the musicians; on entering the 2008 workshop she was welcomed by a standing ovation and hugs from several musicians.

¹² Whereas Barenboim and Said state that the Divan is a non-political project, I believe that the term ‘un-political’ would be more appropriate, following the theories of Mulhern: “Whereas ‘non-political’ denotes a stance of neutrality in relation to rival political interests [...] ‘unpolitical’ describes a posture of moral detachment (usually critical) from politics as a form of social relationship” (Mulhern 2000: 175). This is not to say that Barenboim and Said oppose any kind of politics due to moral detachment, rather that they are opposed to forming social relationships between the young musicians from the Middle East that are built on rival political interests.

¹³ Patrice Chéreau directed Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in Bayreuth in 1976, a much-discussed and celebrated production. At the Divan workshop in 2008 a video of the first act of *Die Walküre* was screened following a discussion between Barenboim, Chéreau and the Divan musicians who performed the same act that year.

The second condition of the orchestra is the musicians' nationality, a condition that must be seen in connection with the third condition; namely, the politically tense situation in the Middle East. The organizers strive for quantitative balance between Arabs and Israelis, complemented by students from Andalucía. However, for political reasons, striving for balance has not always been an easy objective to fulfill. In 2006, there were 43 Israelis and Jews, 37 Arabs and Half-Arabs, 21 Spaniards and one Turk expected to attend the workshop. However the Summer Rain war between Israel and Hezbollah broke out just before the workshop and caused all but one Lebanese musician to stay away. In sympathy with the Lebanese, the Syrian students also refused to attend (Beckles Willson 2007: 16 and conversation with Beckles Willson February 19, 2008). As a result, the Arab-Israeli balance was disrupted. However in 2008 the desire for balance was once again fulfilled, with 121 musicians from a total of eight Middle Eastern countries participating.¹⁴

As earlier mentioned, Barenboim and Said emphasized the non-political dimension of the project, emphasizing that it was not established as a political peace process but as a *humanitarian* project. In the Divan, the "universal metaphysical language of music becomes the link, it is the language of the continuous dialogue that these young people have with each other," Barenboim states (Barenboim 2006: BBC Reith Lectures 2006, Lecture 4). In his opinion, music is the framework, the abstract language of harmony. Through the Divan, Said and Barenboim wished to offer an arena for dialogue and cooperation. Or as one informant put it:

Informant: The purpose of the orchestra is to create understanding between people, a better world. We won't bring peace, of course, and we won't bring any solution. But we can discuss, and this is what we do. From today till the end of the tour we will discuss possible solutions; a two-step solution, ten-step solution, 20-step solution... It won't help. But we all come here to make music. The beautiful thing about this orchestra, and Barenboim said this once, is that it succeeds only because when we come here, we are all even. We come here to make music. We have one goal. To make the music sound beautiful. All the rest is the rest. I don't think we will bring the solution, or even help bring a solution. It's a great model though, this orchestra.

¹⁴ Iran, Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Palestine. This is in addition to the required overall makeup of 40% Spanish musicians, which is a condition imposed by Junta de Andalucía who fund the orchestra and the Foundation.

This informant emphasizes the musical objectives of the orchestra, however he also includes the political discussions as a natural element of the project. Nonetheless, it is music skills rather than political stance that decides who participates in the annual workshops. As noted in the following quote by Barenboim and Said (2002: 7) music is a condition of the Divan Orchestra:

[...] Because it does not contain limited associations as words do. Music teaches us that there is nothing that does not include its parallel or opposite as the case may be; therefore no element is entirely independent because it is by definition in a relationship of interdependence.

In this quotation we read about music itself, but the same quote could be used to explain how Said and Barenboim think about the possible forms of collaboration the workshop offers. The musicians are on ‘neutral ground’, sharing their interest and passion for music, while facing their parallel or opposite in a relationship where no one is entirely independent. According to the official webpage of the orchestra, Barenboim and Said see the group as a “forum where young people from Israel and all the Arab countries can express themselves freely and openly whilst at the same time hearing the narrative of the other” (URL: <http://west-easterndivan.artists.warner.de/>). In the 2008 Call for Applications, we find the view of Barenboim and Said referred to in this way (URL: <http://www.barenboim-said.org/index.php?id=190>):

They decided to create a workshop for young musicians [...] with the aim of combining musical study and development with sharing knowledge and comprehension between people from cultures that traditionally has been rivals. In this workshop, young musicians build upon their musical knowledge while living side-by-side with people from countries that may be engaged in conflict with their own.

As we can see, Barenboim and Said have underlined the non-political aim of this project time and again, making this - along with music - a central condition of the orchestra. Notwithstanding these conditions, Barenboim and Said acknowledge the possible political *consequences* of the orchestra playing and conversing together. As Said argues (Said and Barsamian 2003: 34):

Nobody is going to sign a declaration at the end. It's just a kind of peculiar mix which has a kind of cultural center to it, and all sorts of unforeseen and possible consequences that may be political, but since none of us is a politician, we're not really interested in that aspect of it. What we are interested in is the power of music and discussion and culture to create a sense of equality and fellowship otherwise unavailable to us in the anguish and tension of the polarized life of the Middle East.¹⁵

Barenboim and Said also formulated two absolutely necessary ideas that have a clear political significance, and which should be seen as core elements of the conditions of the orchestra (URL: <http://west-easterndivan.artists.warner.de/>):

1. There is no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
2. The destinies of the Israeli and Palestinian people are inextricably linked and the land that some call Greater Israel and others Palestine is a land for two people.

In a Charlie Rose interview of Barenboim one week after Said's death in 2003, Barenboim explained that by coming to the early workshops the musicians showed that they could agree on these two ideas, "If not, they would not have come!" (Charlie Rose 2003). This expression gives us the possibility to explore the musician's political willingness (if not eagerness) to participate in a project that has clear political connotations. In Chapter 5 I explore how the musicians include the political features of the orchestra in the empowerment process.

On several occasions, political pronouncements have taken part at concerts of the Divan Orchestra. As we saw earlier, the Israeli-Hezbollah war that caused the Lebanese and Syrian musicians to stay away, characterized the 2006 workshop. Israeli military attacks on Palestine also made it difficult for the Palestinian musicians to participate. Barenboim responded by arguing that the orchestra could not continue to play while pretending that the wars were not happening, so he drafted a statement that condemned the bombings of civilians in Lebanon and the rocket attacks on civilians in Israel (Sewell 2006). After several days of debates, the musicians agreed on the draft statement and published it in their tour program of 2006.¹⁶ Also in 2008, a public announcement was made. After a discussion in Oslo the day before their concert, the orchestra and Barenboim agreed on a speech

¹⁵ This quote is taken from an interview made prior to the workshop in Weimar in 1999.

¹⁶ For the complete resolution see Appendix 1 (German version).

to be made as the encore at the Oslo concert. After the performance, Barenboim turned to the audience and expressed that he and the orchestra wanted the world to know that the Divan Orchestra as a project would not be completed until the orchestra were allowed to play in every Middle Eastern state without having to leave out one national group. This announcement was made for two reasons. Firstly, it was a result of the fact that they were in Oslo, the city where the failed peace process of 1994 got its name. The announcement was, in other words, a symbolic act in the framework of the Middle Eastern peace processes, or as Barenboim expresses it (URL: http://www.danielbarenboim.com/journal_reflections_w_e_tour.htm):

I felt it was appropriate to say a few words to the audience in the city whose famous Accords had awakened so much hope and later created such disillusionment among Middle Easterners. I spoke of the need for Israelis and Palestinians to find the mental space that is essential for any realistic dialogue in the Middle East, and of the inability to solve this conflict through military action or, for that matter, solely through politics.

Secondly, this statement was a result of a 2008 concert in Amman, which had the mayor's invitation but was later cancelled (or, in Barenboim's words "postponed") due to internal security reasons. This also occurred during their winter tour of January 2009, where the orchestra had planned to give a concert in Doha, Qatar. Due to the escalating violence in Gaza and the resulting concern for the musicians' safety, the concert had to be postponed indefinitely (URL: <http://www.danielbarenboim.com/news2009.htm>). The musicians participating at the 2009 winter tour issued a statement regarding the Gaza war (Scally 2009).¹⁷ At the 2008 workshop, I was also told that the orchestra had been invited to Syria several times, but on the condition that Israeli musicians were left out of the performance.

In 2005, the orchestra gave a concert in Ramallah, Palestine, that was historically significant and was broadcasted by the German-French channel ARTE and recorded on DVD. In the documentary film "*Knowledge is the Beginning / the Ramallah Concert*" we learn about the musicians' feared going to Ramallah, but we also felt that the concert was important. With the use of extensive security measures, the musicians were transported to the West Bank and Ramallah, not

¹⁷ I am currently unable to obtain the statement as it has not been published on either the Foundation's website, the orchestra's, or Daniel Barenboim's website.

even knowing if it would be possible to play a concert there. One of the musicians indicated that the Israelis feared the security in Ramallah, whereas the Arab musicians feared going through Israeli land and the implications that this might have for them when they returned to their home countries (DVD: Smaczny 2006: Prologue, *the Ramallah Concert*).¹⁸

We find that the orchestra's freedom to travel and perform in the Middle East is both limited and complicated, due to the various nationalities represented in the group.¹⁹ The musicians' backgrounds are not only a factor when performing in the Middle East, it is one of the conditions of the orchestra because the orchestras draws legitimacy for its existence from the regional conflicts of the Middle East. The musicians' backgrounds will be more thoroughly dealt with in Chapter 4, 'National identity in the Divan'. However, as nationality is a core condition of the orchestra, I wish to show the reader the formal criteria for joining the orchestra. In the Call for Applications 2008, we find the following criteria (URL: <http://www.barenboim-said.org/index.php?id=190>):

In order to be able to compete in the auditions, the musicians of the aforementioned specialties must meet the following requirements: [...] To be a national or have a background of any of the Arab countries of the Middle East (Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, etc.), Israel or Spain. By background we mean that any of their blood relatives, up to second degree, are passport holders of any of the aforementioned countries.

Many of the musicians are born outside of the Middle East and are well-established professionals in Europe and the United States. In other words, the politically tense situation in the Middle East may not directly affect the musicians.²⁰ In 2008 I found that many of the musicians had a background in places other than the Middle East, however I argue that the majority of these

¹⁸ As for the Spanish musicians, they were simply afraid of the overall situation in the region.

¹⁹ There are other obstacles and limitations, the main one resulting from musicians undertaking military service. One of my Israeli informants told me about the obstacles for those musicians doing their military service while playing in the Divan. For the Ramallah concert in 2005, all Israelis aside from those in military service were invited to come to the West Bank but, as my informant says, "Three Israeli Divan musicians were soldiers at that time. Although all the soldiers wanted to go we couldn't because we were soldiers, the Palestinians didn't agree that we should come."

²⁰ This aspect is supported by the findings of Beckles Willson who conducted fieldwork with the orchestra in 2006 and 2007. During a conversation with her, I was informed that a majority of musicians with Arab backgrounds had only a second-degree connection; that is, that one or more of their grandparents held an Arab passport (conversation with Beckles Willson, February 19, 2008).

connections are a result of the Foundation's scholarships, which offer Divan musicians the opportunity to study abroad (mainly in Germany). This aspect will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Edward W. Said and Daniel Barenboim

On Edward W. Said

Said was born into a Christian Palestinian family in Jerusalem in 1935, during the time of the British Mandate of Palestine. As a result of the Jewish/Arab political turbulence that resulted in the creation of the state of Israel, Said's family fled to Cairo, Egypt, in 1948 where Said spent most of his childhood. Some years later his family was again displaced, this time to Lebanon; due to difficulties the family faced living in a predominantly Muslim society. Said was educated in Cairo and later in the US, where he became Professor of English and comparative literature at Colombia University in New York. Said's background is, as you can see, not only one of the Middle East and the US; it is also a background with a strong British influence: He was born in the British Mandate of Palestine and grew up in Cairo, which was also British at the time. When Egypt became Egyptian, Said immigrated to the US.

For the majority of his life, Said lived in the US, however he never forgot his Arab background and as an intellectual he was an articulate commentator on the crisis in the Middle East and an advocate for the Palestinian cause. In numerous articles, interviews and books he advocated the need to tell the world - and Americans in particular - the truth about Israel's treatment of Palestinians, the urgency of Palestinian recognition and acceptance of the state of Israel and, lastly, the necessity of talking freely about the failures of Arab leaders. He was a strong critic of the 1994 Oslo Accords, and argued that while it might seem utopian now, the only long-term stable solution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the one-state solution where Palestinians and Israelis live side-by-side in a society based on equality and friendship.²¹

As a scholar in the US, Said was both an influential and a controversial figure. He belonged to the post-structural school of thought that became famous after

²¹ For example see Said (1995) and Said (2000).

1968 and included Derrida and Foucault. As Symes argues, Said's chief claim to fame as a scholar is his contribution to understanding the power and knowledge behind European colonialism (Symes 2006: 309). In "Orientalism" (1978), one of Said's most famous and celebrated (albeit controversial) books, Said discusses how Western people in general - and scholars in particular - have understood and dealt with the Orient as a tool to strengthen their own position. He argues that the Orient has participated in defining Europe by being Europe's cultural counterpart ([1978] 1994). Through Orientalism, Europe has defined the Orient as the 'other' and this is a relationship that has given Europe power, dominance and hegemony over the Orient. This power, dominance and hegemony include the culture and values of the West. At first glance, Orientalism may seem to refer primarily to the methodology of Middle Eastern studies, however Said's theory has set the stage for a whole new field of postcolonial studies and a wide-ranging discourse within the field of humanism.

Lesser known is Said's contribution to music, specifically within the European art music tradition. To him, music served as an important backdrop to his overall intellectual project and provided analogies for his thinking about culture, history, politics and society. He argued that the contrapuntal method was an exemplary way of thinking, and a method for holding together and analyzing conflicts and contradicting stands of culture and history. Using what he called 'contrapuntal reading,' Said claimed that it was necessary to take into account interdependency in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and this allowed him to argue increasingly for a binational state. In other words, the musical technique had political value in real world, as a form of praxis.

Unlike other arts, music's lack of communication with the material world - particularly its social and political aspects - rendered it immune to the politicized critiques of neo-Marxism and post-structuralism (as argued earlier in Chapter 1). Said, however, offered an alternative position on the exceptional position of classical music in the twentieth century. He defended the canon's power and ability to become part of the world, while also being able to dislodge and disengage from it. In a post-structuralist manner, he presents the canon this way (Said 2004: 25):

Some etymologists speculate that the word "canon" (as in "canonical") is related to the Arabic word "*qanun*," or law in the binding, legalistic sense of that word. But that is only one rather restrictive meaning. The other is a musical one, canon as a

contrapuntal form employing numerous voices in usually strict imitation of each other, a form, in other words, expressing motion, playfulness, discovery, and in the rhetorical sense, invention. Viewed this way, the canonical humanities, far from being a rigid tablet of fixed rules and monuments bullying us from the past - like Wagner's *Beckmesser* marking the youthful Walther's mistakes in *Die Meistersinger* - will always remain open to changing combinations of sense and signification; every reading and interpretation of a canonical work reanimates it in the present, furnishes an occasion for rereading, allows the modern and the new to be situated together in a broad historical field whose usefulness is that it shows us history as an agnostic process still being made, rather than finished and settled once and for all.

Said's engagement with music is best explained through an understanding of his defense of the explanatory power of the 'canon' (in both senses of the word). I believe that the Divan Orchestra should be regarded as a practical realization of his approach to both the musical canon and his contrapuntal reading of Middle Eastern conflicts.

There is a relationship between Said's postcolonial theories and his view of the musical canon as a global rather than European or Western, belonging. In his book *Musical Elaborations* (Said 1991: xiv) Said argues that it is far from coherent to talk about "Western art music", and when it is talked about as if it entails only a western discourse it is being constructed with non-western, non-classical music and cultures very much in mind. He continues (ibid):

Even if we confine ourselves to "Western" classical music, what is impressive about musical practice is that it takes place in many different places, for different purposes, for different constituencies and practitioners, and of course at many different times.

In other words, Said argues that what we call "Western art music" is something that is being used and played by many people, in far more places than most Westerners believe. Also, the term is something that exists because of, or at least in correlation with, an opposite or an "other." In other words, Said states that the Western musical tradition - the canon - has been globalized. As a result, this particular musical tradition is, according to Said, not an object for postcolonial studies, which refuses to treat culture as an autonomous and politically innocent domain of social life.

On Daniel Barenboim

A shared passion for music and ideas was surely the binding force in Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said's friendship, but no doubt there was also the pull of their parallel personal geographies; the thinkers shared a complex overlapping of cultural backgrounds (Guzeliman in Barenboim and Said 2002: ix).

Barenboim was born into a Russian-Jewish family that had immigrated to Buenos Aires, Argentina, two generations prior. In 1952, he and his family moved to Tel Aviv and became citizens of the newly established state of Israel (ibid: x) (incidentally, this occurred at the same time Said's family fled Palestine). Since then, Barenboim has lived in London, Paris, Chicago, Jerusalem and Berlin. Being a talented pianist and a prominent music conductor, Barenboim has been a central figure in the musical world throughout his entire adult life. He has been Music Director of the Orchestre de Paris (1975-1989) and of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1991-2006) and is now the General Music Director of the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin. He was appointed Chief Conductor for Life at the Staatskapelle Berlin in 2000, and named Maestro Scaligero at La Scala, Milan, in 2006. He appears regularly with the Berlin Philharmonic and Vienna Philharmonic orchestras. As a pianist, he has held concerts worldwide, and has made numerous recordings since his piano debut in 1954.

On many occasions, Barenboim has taken a public stance on political issues. He has been an outspoken advocate for the performance of Wagner's music in Israel (with strong support from Said²²) and was among the first prominent Israeli musicians to perform in the Palestinian West Bank. In 2004, Barenboim was awarded the Israeli Wolf Prize, which was established to honor outstanding artists and scientists who have worked "in the interest of mankind and friendly relations among people" (Barenboim 2004). In his acceptance speech before the Knesset²³, Barenboim referred to the Israeli Declaration of Independence²⁴ (ibid):

²² The "Wagner Taboo"; the story of Barenboim playing Wagner in Israel and Said's support of his action, is covered in Chapter 4.

²³ The Israeli Parliament.

²⁴ The declaration was approved by the Jewish People's Council on the day that the British Mandate of Palestine expired, and the state of Israel was declared established. For complete text, see (URL): mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/Declaration%20of%20Establishment%20of%20State%20of%20Israel

I am asking today with deep sorrow: Can we, despite all our achievements, ignore the intolerable gap between what the Declaration of Independence promised and what was fulfilled, the gap between the idea and the realities of Israel? Does the condition of occupation and domination over another people fit the Declaration of Independence? Is there any sense in the independence of one at the expense of the fundamental rights of the other? Can the Jewish people, whose history is a record of continued suffering and relentless persecution, allow themselves to be indifferent to the rights and suffering of a neighboring people? Can the State of Israel allow itself an unrealistic dream of an ideological end to the conflict instead of pursuing a pragmatic, humanitarian one based on social justice?

Finally, Barenboim provided his audience with an answer: “There is no military solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict, neither a moral nor a strategic one” (ibid). His response, which could be said to summarize his position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, resulted in the majority of Knesset members denouncing him, and many argued that he should not receive the prize at all (see (DVD) Smaczny 2005). However, Barenboim received the prize, and ended his speech by informing the Knesset that the money would be donated to music education projects in Israel and Ramallah.

In most of the public stands Barenboim has taken, he refers to music as an alternative force. In his BBC Reith Lectures, Barenboim puts forward his view on the power of music (BBC Reith Lectures 2006, Lecture 1):

Music has another weapon that it delivers to us, if we want to take it, and that is one through which we can learn a lot about ourselves, about our society, about the human being, about politics, about society, about anything that you choose to do.

The power of music to learn about these factors has been underlined by Barenboim several times in public announcements regarding the Divan Orchestra. According to him, the Divan Orchestra allows its musicians to express their narratives and at the same time listen to the narratives of the other (URL:<http://west-easterndivan.artists.warner.de/>). He argues that the power of music is different from power itself, which has only one kind of strength; that of control. The power of music does not work exclusively through control, but through “actual real strength, the accumulative strength that comes from the build-up tension” (Barenboim 2006: BBC Reith Lectures 2006, Lecture 5).

Barenboim believes that music is a universal, metaphysical language, however he never makes a connection between this universality and autonomy. As we have seen, according to him it is through this language that the musicians in the Divan Orchestra communicate. However, Barenboim also argues that subjectivity is an integral and necessary part of music, because music is conceived of, and eventually delivered, from one individual's point of view (ibid: Lecture 5). Besides the learning experiences offered through the power of music, Barenboim argues that the orchestra is "an alternative social model"; "a utopian republic"; and "a world of sound" (ibid: Lecture 1 and 4). It is the power of music to speak to all aspects of a human's being, and to allow that person to experience the connectivity of personal, social and political spheres, because in music there are no independent elements (ibid: Lecture 5). According to Barenboim's theories, it is the "flat" structure that occurs through music, a point where everyone is interdependent while at the same time expressing their own narrative and subjectivity, which makes the orchestra a "utopia" or "alternative social model."

3. Methodological considerations

In its broader conception, fieldwork in cultural anthropology is characterized by a number of typical subjective and personal experiences. These are usually elided in formal method text [...] (Robben and Sluka 2007: 13).

Ethnography's use of multiple data sources is one of its great advantages, Atkinson and Hammersley argue (1983: 23). By including her/his own role within the research, and "systematically exploiting our participation in the world under study as researchers, we [the ethnographic researcher] can develop and test theory without placing reliance on futile appeals to empiricism" they write (ibid: 24).

These introductory assertions frame the aim of this chapter, namely to highlight the methodological considerations that emerged prior, during, and after my stay with the Divan Orchestra at the 2008 summer workshop, and furthermore to present my study within a broader field of cultural disciplines. My study of the Divan Orchestra is based on ethnographic practice in ethnomusicology; through participant observation and partially structured research interviews I collected relevant empirical data for the initial research problem. The word 'observation' is often used as a synonym for 'fieldwork', however throughout this chapter I use 'fieldwork' as a generic term for my stay in Pilas in summer 2008, including the research methods I used during my stay.

To combine more methods is called 'triangulation'. The combination of interview/conversation and observation provides a useful foundation to validate the researcher's interpretation, Fangen writes (2004: 140). Still, interviews and observation provide two different forms of data, and should be dealt with accordingly; observation provides action-data whereas interviews provide discursive data (ibid). My starting point was not a well-developed theory from which a set of hypotheses could be derived and tested through ethnographic findings. Nor does my research follow the methods of 'grounded theory', in which a

theory is constructed, discovered and developed through data from empiric research activity (for example see Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, Fangen 2004: 19). Rather, I find myself in the *hermeneutic* research tradition, which focuses on understanding and interpreting phenomena, and furthermore to applying this understanding to the meaning of a text or symbol. Fangen writes that hermeneutics should not solely be applied to written texts, as the original idea suggests, but also be applied on human actions. The ethnographer can *read* the human actions; namely interpret the human action in terms of its meaningfulness, seeing this human action as an expression that reaches way beyond its immediate presentation (Fangen 2004: 178, referring to Barthes 1975 and Ricoeur 1981).

Besides the hermeneutic tradition, one could say that my fieldwork belongs to the tradition of ethnomusicology or socio-musicology. Nettl argues that ethnomusicology comprises (1) the study of music in culture, (2) the study of the world's music from a comparative and relativistic perspective, (3) a study with the use of fieldwork, and lastly (4) the study of all the musical manifestations of a society (Nettl 2005: 12-13). Ethnomusicology is a discipline that is intellectually aligned with Cultural Studies, cultural sociology, and cultural or social anthropology. It can thus be seen as a study featuring a substantial fieldwork component. Well aware that this is a broad and complex discussion, my study of the Divan Orchestra is not a study of music in culture in the classic mid 20th century ethnomusicological sense. Rather it is a study of music *as* culture, a study on how music both informs and strengthens what is in our case a “constructed” shared culture among the Divan Orchestra members.²⁵

In the following I will present my experience from the stay in Pilas in 2008, focusing on the methodological considerations and choices made along the way, ethics, and analysis and validation. I will present the reader to my fieldwork chronologically, starting by presenting the planning process prior to the stay and ending with the analysis and interpretation process. The validation process is presented as the first element, as this is a central aspect all elements in the fieldwork. Nonetheless, firstly I will shortly present the two main methods used in the fieldwork; the qualitative research interview and participation-observation.

²⁵ For the discussion of “music and culture,” “music in culture” and “music as culture,” see for example Merriam, Alan P. (1964): *The Anthropology of Music*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press and Blacking, John (1973): *How musical is man?* Seattle: University of Washington Press

The qualitative research interview

During my fieldwork I used the qualitative research interview as one of two main methods. The qualitative research interview is a “space for production of knowledge,” Kvale argues (2001: 28); it is an exchange of the participants’ point of views around a topic they share interest in. The research interview derives from the everyday conversation, but is, though, a specific form of conversation. First, it considers the interviewer’s methodological awareness of the questions raised and the topics discussed; second, it considers the asymmetric authority relations between the interviewer and the interviewee, juxtaposed in quite specific roles, where the researcher/interviewer defines and controls the framework of the conversation (ibid). Still, the qualitative research interview can capture variations in the informants’ perception about a topic, and hence gives a picture of a diverse and controversial human world (ibid: 23).

As I will explain more thoroughly later on, the interviews carried out were open, with a relatively low degree of formal structure (ibid: 55). Still, given that I prepared an interview guide prior to the workshop, and used this as a framework for the topics discussed in the interviews, it would be just as correct to label the interviews *half-structured*. This was an appropriate method inasmuch as the aim of the interviews was to obtain *empirical* information about the members’ experience with the Divan-orchestra

Participant-observation

Besides carrying out half-structured interviews, I chose to focus on participant-observation, which by and large means captivating actions, incidents, norms, and values from the perspective of the people that you study (Fangen 2004: 70).²⁶ My observation method was the “participant-observation method,” which includes both involvement and detachment; as far as possible to think, see, feel and sometimes act as a member of the culture being studied, and at the same time detach oneself from the culture by being a trained anthropologist from another culture (Powdermaker 1966:9 cited in Robben and Sluka 2007: 1).

Participant-observation describes the way the researcher works when observing,

²⁶ The choice of participant-observation as one of two main methods was taken mainly out of practical reasons, which is dealt with in “In the Field.”

showing the complex balance between being (*participating*) among people and operate or act together with them, whilst at the same time studying and observing their actions (Fangen 2004: 28). Becoming a “full” member of the society you study, where the role as a researcher is more or less forgotten, is often called to “go native,” which can be “considered to be antithetical to the social scientist’s stance of objectivity and standing as a professional” (Ewing 1994 cited in Robben and Sluka 2007: 13).²⁷ “Going native” was though not an alternative for me as I was first of all not allowed to join the orchestra, (as presented in the introduction, according to the Regulatory Requirements all participants must have at least a second degree connection to the Middle East, which I do not have), and secondly because of the simple reason of my lack of instrumental skills to join the orchestra. Listening to the orchestra rehearsals strengthened my role as a non-participating observer during the workshop, still my interaction with the musicians in their breaks and spare time made my a participant-observer.

Validation

Quantitative material is usually evaluated through formalized standards of validation, reliability, and objectivity. However, qualitative research material requires other means of evaluation, because it produces a different type of data than quantitative research. Several researchers, especially within the postmodern tradition have therefore suggested to change the quantitative evaluation terms to other, more suitable criteria’s such as *credibility* rather than validity, transferability rather than external validity²⁸ and corroboration rather than objectivity (Fangen 2004: 195, Brewer 2000: 24-25). Well aware of this, I still chose to use the word *validation* to describe how the knowledge produced through this study can be regarded as legitimate.

The main problem that can occur when using interviews as a method is that the informant may not necessarily tell the truth, or at least may not provide accurate information, invalidating the findings (Kvale 2001: 169). Controlling the level of truth put forward in one single interview is impossible for the researcher,

²⁷ The discussion surrounding the meaning and impact of “going native” has in the later years filled with a postmodern critique of empiricism and objectivity. See Robben and Sluka for exploration and further references (2007: 13-16)

²⁸ External validity refers to the possibility to make generalizations based on the research findings which can be transferred to other contexts similar to the original research context

however, with the use of more than one method, *triangulation*, provides a useful basis for validation of the researcher's interpretation (Fangen 2004: 140). If several sources can confirm and support each other, there is an increase in the potential for validation. My interpretation and reading of the data is discussed later in this chapter.

Validation is not only a matter of how the material is treated after it has been collected in the field; it is a central aspect of all seven levels of the qualitative research: from clarifying the topic of the research, through the planning, interviewing, transcription and analyzing level, and finally in the last two levels validation and reporting (Kvale 2001: 165). Kvale presents the validation aspects this way:

Step	Validity aspect
Setting the topic	The validity depends on how well founded the theoretical pre-assumptions are.
Planning	The validity of the knowledge being produced and the methods to be used in the study
Interviewing	The interviewers reliability and the quality of the interview; follow-up and control questions needs to be raised throughout
Transcription	The choice of writing style raises question of what makes a valid transaction from the spoken to the written word.
Analyzing	Is the interview text valid? Is the interpretation logical?
Validation	A reflexive evaluation of what validation forms are relevant for the study, the accomplishment of the validation in the other levels
Reporting	Does the report give a valid description of the main findings in the study?

*Figure 1: Validation
(Kvale 2001: 165)*

Bearing in mind these elements, I wish to present the methodological considerations I have made along the way within a broader theoretical framework on hermeneutics and ethnography, and the methods these traditions inspires.

Planning

An important step in the fieldwork research, *planning*, is according to Kvale characterized by planning and preparation of the methodological procedures that

will be used to collect data (ibid: 56). These aspects will be presented here. In addition, I would like to add *practical planning* as an element of this second step - as there are many practical issues to be solved in order to get access to the relevant field; practical issues that might have an impact on the access to the relevant information requested (mark: this is another discussion than getting access *in* the field, as we will discuss later).

Practical planning

Prior to the 2008 workshop, I established contact with the orchestra administration (the Foundation), in order to get the permission to conduct research with the orchestra. I was accepted under the following criteria: “You will have to arrange your accommodation on your own, but you are invited to attend the rehearsals and talk to the musicians” (e-mail from Ana Julia sent January 16, 2008). Practically, this meant that I was not allowed to stay at the workshop venue; rather I traveled daily from Seville to Pilas. Not staying with the musicians full time throughout the workshop influenced the access to data, as will be discussed more thoroughly later.

A central part of my planning period was connected to privacy issues; according to the regulatory requirements of the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), every research project where person-sensitive data is being collected must be reported a minimum 30 days before the research project starts (URL: <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/>). Sensitive privacy issues here include information about ethnicity, political/philosophical and or religious orientation, crime suspicions, health information, sexual information or union-membership (NSD meldeskjema footnote 1, cited in Fangen 2004: 159). As I was going to conduct interviews in a research setting where the informant’s ethnicity and political orientation, and possibly also religious orientation were central topics for discussion, I was required to report my research project to the NSD prior to my Pilas stay. In my report to the NSD, I highlighted my method for both collecting, analyzing and presenting my data in terms of privacy issues, focusing mainly on information provided to the research subjects and confidentiality after the data had been collected. The information procedure during my Pilas stay will be presented later. The NSD approved my research project (letter from NSD dated June 25, 2008), and got back to me highlighting the need for making the research

subjects anonymous by changing all of the following: name, instrument, country of origin, gender, and age. As explained earlier, I have chosen to anonymize all person-sensitive aspects, rather than changing name, instrument etc. Complete anonymity has also allowed me to gain access more statistical information from the Foundation. When the Foundation understood with security that any information given to me could not be traced back to the specific musicians, they showed more willingness to provide me with statistics like the number of musicians.

The process of reporting my research project and being clear about my anonymizing is yet another element that secures the validation of this project. The process of reporting did not only have an ethical impact, it also formed my way of thinking about the informants I was going to meet, and raised my awareness of the sensitive political and ethnic information I assumed I was going to get from the musicians. In other words, it shaped the knowledge I was already producing in the planning period.

Planning of methodological procedures

As written, I was given permission to interview as many people as I wanted from the orchestra, and this created my starting point for planning the methodological procedures. Prior to the workshop, I prepared an interview guide highlighting the questions I wanted to focus on. An interview guide is a draft of the topics to be covered in the conversation. In cases of structured interviews, the interview guide has a detailed composition, showing both the topics and questions related to the various subjects, and it might even lay out the order or sequence of the questions (Kvale 2001: 76). For half-structured interviews, the interview guide consists of an outline list of subjects for discussion, and it might also suggest questions linked to the subjects (*ibid*).

I chose to make an interview guide that fit into the description of the structured interviews, as I believe this was personally helpful to the process of clarifying the aims and objectives of the fieldwork. What do I want to know? How will I get the information I need to create a knowledge and understanding of the field of interest regarding the orchestra? However, in the interview situation, I did not use my interview guide rigidly, rather, I focused on the subjects given in the interview guide, and “improvised” questions around these subjects. This is in line

with what Hammersley and Atkinson write about ethnographers: “ethnographers do not decide beforehand the questions they want to ask, though they may enter the interview with a list of issues to be covered. Nor do ethnographers restrict themselves to a single mode of questioning,” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 113). I decided to use the interview guide precisely as a *guide* and nothing more. As Fangen writes, an interview guide should not be strictly followed, as this might weaken your chance of getting as much information as needed from the informant (Fangen 2004: 147-148).

Categories and research questions	Suggested interview questions
A) Background What makes the musicians want to join the orchestra? What signifies their identities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this your first time at the workshop? Why did you want to join the orchestra? How did you hear about the orchestra? • When did you start playing your instrument? What made you choose that instrument? Why did you want to play an instrument? Did you go to a music school? How was it for you to study music (on lower and higher level)? Do you want to be a musician?
B) Reception What is the musicians' reception of the project? Does the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra have a conflict-transforming role between its musicians?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is it for you to be here? Have you made any friends here? • Do you think you are learning anything here? What have you learned? Who did you learn it from? • Can you say something about the music you play in the orchestra? Have you played the pieces before? How do you think Barenboim interprets the music? • Do you think there is a link between this orchestra and the situation in the Middle East?

C)Identity What signifies the identity of the musicians? What does this mean for the project's sustainability and conflict transforming role? What is the role of music in creating this identity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe yourself? • Can you tell me something about your origin? Where do you come from? Have you lived there your whole life? Where does your parents come from? How was it for you to grow up there? • What do you do when you are not playing in the Divan?
D)Sustainability Is this project sustainable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe this project? • Do you think this project can continue? • Is music important for this project?

Figure 2: Interview Guide

It is crucial to get as much information as possible prior to the fieldwork, Fangen writes (2004: 44), therefore you should write down everything you know about the field and your assumptions about the environment you will study before you enter the field (ibid). The main sources available to me were media coverage, research articles made by Beckles Willson (2007, and forthcoming article, 2009, see bibliography) and the literature by Barenboim and Said highlighting the orchestra and its history (for example see Barenboim and Said 2002, Said and Barsamian 2003 and Barenboim [1991] 2002 and 2008, please refer to bibliography for further details).²⁹ Furthermore, recordings of several concerts and one documentary film (Smaczny 2005) were available. Although this is not a discussion I will carry out in a vast extent in this thesis, I will argue that the media coverage of the Divan Orchestra is celebrating and admiring, and this informed my first, romanticized meeting with the orchestra. Despite this, and related to my study of the orchestra since 2007, I raised several critical questions, and a critical approach to the orchestra characterized my assumptions prior to the 2008 workshop. Before I left for Pilas I wrote down my general assumptions, some of which are cited below:

²⁹ The orchestra has also been referred to in several books, however only as examples. For example see: Keefe, John and Murray, Simon David (2007): *Physical Theatres: A Critical Reader*. London: Routledge; Mason, Rachel and Eça, Teresa (2008): *International Dialogues about Visual Culture, Education and Art*. Bristol: Intellect Books; Ryan, Stephen (2007): *The Transformation of Violent Intercommunal Conflict*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd; and Kuriansky, Judith (2007): *Beyond Bullets and Bombs: Grassroots Peacebuilding Between Israelis and Palestinians*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group

- I will meet many people from all over the Middle East, but many will be from Europe/US/other parts of the world as well.
- Identity of the musicians: Middle East
- They want to talk about music, not politics. My political findings will be based on my subjective analysis of behavior.
- They will have strong ideas on the role of music in the orchestra - in line with Barenboim's thoughts.
- Barenboim is their idol and role model
- They will behave as VIPs
- It will be easier to work with boys than girls
- They will find it nice to get someone listening and being interested in them
- It will be challenging to me to introduce myself
- Their background will affect my emotions
- I might be carried away by the atmosphere and need time to become "critical" again after the workshop
- I might get some challenges in cooperating with the administration
- It is exhausting, interesting, and fun.

Looking at my assumptions, I decided that I wanted to do everything I could to leave my assumptions, and be "carried away" by the orchestra. By being "carried away" I do not mean returning to my first interpretation of the orchestra, informed by a celebratory media coverage, rather, I wanted to enter a state of mind

characterized by open- and willingness towards the Divan and its musicians. Practically this meant avoiding all critical discussions for a period of one month prior to the workshop; making myself aware of my critical assumptions in order to prepare myself for an active, engaging fieldwork experience.

In the field

In Pilas I spent the first days getting access in the field, introducing my research, myself, and underlining my role among the musicians. Fangen writes that you should not take access to the field for granted (Fangen 2004: 65-66), but in my case I generally felt warmly welcomed to the field by musicians as well as the administration, and on the fifth day in the field I performed the first two out of my total of nine interviews. Practical details such as the fact that I was given the allowance to eat with the musicians every day free of charge opened many doors for me, as this was an important venue for establishing contact with the musicians, presenting myself, and observe the everyday conversations among them. As soon as the musicians found that I was interested in, and knew a little bit about the music they play and about what it means to be a musician, informal discussions on these topics followed, and helped me to be accepted in the field.

Many journalists were present at the workshop for a smaller or longer period of time. First of all, two press conferences were held during the workshop. Secondly, some journalists were invited to stay with the musicians for a few days, and wrote feature articles about the orchestra.³⁰ The Foundation's press secretary took care of all journalists, and introduced them to musicians for interviews. This was not done for me, something that turned out to be a great advantage for me. I was not in any way "controlled" or "observed" by an administration that, as will be discussed later, seemed to have a wish for controlling the press coverage of the Divan-orchestra. Rather, I could work freely and establish contact with as many musicians as I wanted. Furthermore, not being in the hands of the press secretary and/or the administration helped me in my needed clarification to the musicians that I was a student, researcher and observer, and not a journalist. Several times I experienced that the musicians felt the need to check with me if I was a journalist interested in the Middle Eastern politics and the "beauty of this idea" only, as one

³⁰ For example see Promphet (2008).

musician formulated it. When my role was clarified, the musicians soon accepted me. This can also be understood as a central aspect of validating the level of truth-telling from the musicians; as they knew I was not a journalist they also felt more free to include me in their self-understanding of the Divan Orchestra and their role as a musician in that context.

During the first days I realized that the musicians' daily schedule left little room for long interviews. Therefore, I quickly decided to strengthen my focus on observation notes in addition to the interviews. As written above, using both methods is seen by many as an advantage, as you get access to many sorts of data. This also secures the validity of the data, which will be discussed later. It was important for me to make this decision early in the workshop, and use my time there to get as much data as possible, from a variety of methods, rather than spending time waiting patiently and passively for a musician with free time for an interview.

As mentioned earlier, I was not allowed to stay at the venue of the workshop. Thus, practical problems, such as bus timetables and taxi costs, limited my possibility for a more comprehensive fieldwork.³¹ However, I got to stay some evenings and take part in some of the evening program, which gave me useful information and allowed me to experience the discussions that were carried out, both the formal discussions (with invited guests) and the informal discussions among the participants. Through observing the social activity and spare time activities in the evenings, I also got to see the way the musicians interact with their fellow musicians and fellow constituencies, and saw how they came together in groups according to geographical borders and ethnicity.

Fangen writes that the relation between the researcher and the informants can be affected by the role the of the researcher. This is a result of structural differences, given the fact that the researcher is present in an environment he or she does not necessarily belong to, and also because there are a wide range of issues the researcher cannot control, such as his or her age, gender, ethnicity/nationality, and class (Fangen 2004: 117-131). For my part, age was not an issue that affected the research in a negative way. As I was more or less at the same age of the musicians I was easily included and did not look or behave as an outsider.

³¹ I was traveling from Seville to Pilas and back on a daily basis, which is a distance of approximately 35 km. The last bus from Pilas every evening left at 7 p.m., which meant that I missed most of the evening activities. However, I chose to stay many evenings and go by taxi instead (a rather expensive experience), and observed approximately 50% of the evenings.

However, gender, ethnicity, nationality and to a certain extent class might have affected my fieldwork, most importantly, being a woman might have had an impact on my research. In my experience it was generally easier for me to establish contact with male musicians in the orchestra. The informants will be discussed below.

Before discussing the selection of informants and the information given to the musicians about my research, I would like to mention the farewell with the musicians at the workshop. When I left them the last time, the musicians were leaving for a tour the morning after, in other words, they were still in the middle of a several weeks long project, whilst my research stay was over. The musicians visited Oslo as a part of their tour, which gave me an additional two days with them two weeks after I left; however, the main part of the fieldwork was over when I left them in Pils. According to Evans-Pritchard (1964, cited in Fangen 2004: 100), fieldwork is not successful unless there is sorrow from both sides when the researcher leaves the field. In my fieldwork I experienced sorrow twice. First, when I left Pils, the musicians signaled that they were sorry that I was leaving; second, in Oslo, where I believe I was the one with the strongest reaction to the parting. According to Evans-Pitchard, then, my fieldwork can be said to be successful.

Information

I decided to be completely open to all musicians about my research, first hoping and then experiencing that this resulted in the musicians trust in me, which gave me access to information. As written above, my research project was confirmed by the NSD, who required a written consent signed by all interviewed informants, and an information letter to every musician who asked for it. All my informants have been informed about the aim of my project, orally and/or through a written information letter. As my research focus changed between participant-observation and half-structured interviews, the information given to the informants changed from setting to setting. Every interviewed informant was given a written information letter prior to the interview, and was asked to sign a written consent for the use of the information given in the recorded interview.

I did not give the information letter to everyone I spoke to informally during the almost two weeks workshop, however, throughout the workshop I was clear about what I was doing, and gave the same information as from the written letter

orally. Everyone who asked was also given a copy of my information letter.

The informants

Kvale answers the question of how many informants you should interview in a very simple way: “Interview as many people necessary to get the information you need” (Kvale 2001: 58). Prior to the workshop I aimed at getting as many interviews as possible, but as written, the daily schedule limited the possibilities for in-depth interviews, and the interviews were supplemented by “grab-and-go” comments collected through participant-observation.

My informants can be categorized in two groups: (1) nine interviewed informants and (2) several more informal informants approached through participant-observation. The first category of informants covers the geographical span of the Divan Orchestra, the various instrument groups of the orchestra, and includes both newcomers and Divan members since the early beginning (meaning the 1999 - early 2000-workshops). There was not a complete gender balance between the interviewed informants. As previously written, the possibility for me to control the access to interviewed informants was limited by the daily schedule. A critical look at the selection of interviews might raise some questions about the quantitative values of the selection, which perhaps should be even better balanced both in terms of gender, nationality, instruments and years of membership in the Divan-orchestra, although this is not a given criteria for a successful and valid research result. I believe the selection of interviewed informants covers an adequate range of these quantitative criteria. I will generalize all my informants by the name *informant*. Only when a presentation of the informant’s nationality is crucial to understand my research findings, the nationality of the informant is stated, and then without announcing gender, instrument, age or any other details that can disrupt the anonymity.

The second category of informants is the informal informants from the orchestra, who I approached through participant-observation. I was in contact with the vast majority of the totally 121 orchestra members. Furthermore I observed both instrument sectional rehearsals and rehearsals of the orchestra as a whole, including formal and informal discussions, which gave me important insight about the dynamics between the musicians.

Besides the Israeli and Arab participants, Spanish musicians have been

invited to apply for participation. However, this group of participants will not be emphasized throughout this thesis, rather, the scope will be on the Middle Eastern participants. Nonetheless, I also spoke to some of the Spanish musicians; hence the Spanish participants also inform my complete understanding of the Divan Orchestra.

Transcription, analysis and interpretation

Informants might feel offended if one writes quite literally what they have said; verbal language is less coherent and to a certain extent confusing for the reader, and might shed a negative light on the informants' ability to express him/herself (see Fangen 2004: 148 and Kvale 2001: 106). Besides the problematic with verbal language I was also subjected to another difficulty, namely that we all had English as our second or third language. I have therefore chosen to accommodate the text into written English, making all sentences coherent and correcting grammatical mistakes. My "editing" inevitably entails a risk of loss of the original meaning, which opens for questioning the validation of the findings. But as I will argue later on, my "editing" has only been done to a limited extent, and hence my findings can be validated as long as we find interviews to be a validated source.

Transcription, and furthermore choice of the information to be used in the final result has also an authoritative impact, as Feld writes (Feld 2007: 418):

My focus on "editing" invokes a concern with authoritative representation; the power to control which voice talks when, how much, in what order, in what language. [...] This is the inevitable politics of writing culture, of producing selections and passing them off as authentic and genuine, and then confronting a recentered view of that selection process that both questions and comments upon the original frame and focus."

According to Fangen, the description of the participants should be done in terms as closely related to the participants' own words and concepts of their reality as possible. However, if you only use the terms of the participants, you risk ending up giving descriptions rather than also presenting your research analysis of the participants' reality (Fangen 2004: 171). Well aware of the difficulties that arises when transcribing the informants text, I have edited the informants' texts for

presentation in grammatically correct English, and as a researcher chosen which text is to be included and which to be excluded. Throughout I have focused on staying connected to the descriptions made by the musicians, and hence have limited the degree of editing.

Analyzing the material

Fangen writes: “analysis means *adding something* to what you have heard and seen” (ibid 170). By placing your description of the participants’ words and concepts as possible, you will get what Geertz calls *actor-oriented interpretation* (Geertz cited in Fangen 2004: 171). It is through actor-oriented interpretation the people you have studied turns from being studied objects to *informants* that inhabits hands-on knowledge about the reality they live or act in. In this thesis, I have named the musicians that gave me information *informants*. This should be regarded as a positive designation; the information given from the informants appears, though actor-oriented interpretation, throughout this thesis as a *conversation* between the informants and my interpretation. Through narrative ethnography, with a hermeneutic approach, I seek to unveil some mechanisms or hidden meanings in the Divan Orchestra among its musicians. This approach involves reading culture as text, and is regarded as a hermeneutic technique (See Fangen 2004, Cortazzi 2001). My reading has been based on both the interview material and the observation notes I made during my stay in Pilas; which makes a central point in the validation of the findings.

As written, triangulation strengthens the possibility to validate the data, and as written above, if several sources can confirm and support each other, the validation of the findings increases. I have therefore read the interview material and the observation material in combination with each other, and hence searched for the information that is being repeated or confirmed through other interviews or the observation material.

Interpretation

A common critique of interview interpretation is that different readers interpret different meanings from the material, hence putting into question whether the interview is a scientific method (Kvale 2001: 141). However, hermeneutic and postmodern theories open up the possibility for a diversity of meanings to be

interpreted from the very same material. The hermeneutic question-answer-dialectics does not only refer to the questions the reader asks of the text, but also the questions through which the text confronts the reader (ibid: 141-142).

My theoretical background and the questions I chose to ask the informants is the backdrop of my understanding of the Divan Orchestra, and following it characterizes the way I have interpreted the Divan Orchestra findings as a hermeneutic, cultural text. Kvale argues that there are three levels of relationship between the questions asked to the text and the answers drawn out from the same text, with corresponding validity relations:

Interpretation context	Validation relation
Self-understanding	The interviewed person
Critical self-understanding based on common sense	The generic audience
Theoretical understanding	The scientific community

*Figure 3: Interpretation context and validation relation
(Kvale 2001: 144, My translation.)*

The first interpretation context refers to the interpreter's formulation of how the interviewed perceives or understands the meaning of his or her statements (ibid: 146). In the second interpretation context, the interpretation goes further than only formulate the informant's self-understanding; it has a wider interpretation horizon, and includes also a critical perspective on either the informant's statements or the context it appears within. In other words, this interpretation involves a critical interpretation based on common sense (ibid: 145). In the third and final interpretation context a theoretical framework is used to facilitate an interpretation of the statement. The different interpretation contexts lead to different interpretations; nonetheless, there is also coherence between these interpretation contexts, and they all contribute in elucidating a variety of meanings (ibid: 146).

As written, my starting point is the hermeneutic tradition. My findings and experiences from the field is informed by the theoretical framework, and vice versa. Throughout I intend to build a bridge between the experience I have made, the information I have received through the interviews, and the theoretical context

or framework of the study. This results in a partly heavily theoretical and partly experience-close narrative of the Divan Orchestra. On the one hand I have a personal experience and narrative to tell, including the narratives of my informants, and on the other hand I will read these narratives into a broader frame of theories.

4. National identity in the Divan

Let's face it; this workshop would not have been possible in any region in Israel or any Arab country. We needed a neutral territory [...].
(Barenboim [1991] 2002: 183)

In this chapter I wish to carry out a discussion about the role of national identity in the negotiations that take place in the Divan in reference to the Middle East. I will argue that the discussion of national identity should be seen as one of the core aspects in the negotiations within the Divan. As we will see, these negotiations carries strong connotations to the Middle East. National identity should be seen as a key aspect informing the narratives of the musicians. As stated in the introductory chapter, the musicians' narratives make up the starting point for the negotiations taking place in the Divan, both through music and verbal discussions.

However, the orchestra's founders and the Foundation as an actor have not focused on national identity apart from the requirements for applying to the orchestra. In his opening lines in the discussion held in Oslo August 25, 2008, which aimed to "look back in time in order to look forward," Barenboim stated that the founders "never aimed to change nationality as an identity marker for the musicians." This was one of the many discussions at the Divan 2008 workshop focusing on identity (as well as other aspects, which I will return to in Chapter 5); both national identity and mixed identities were subjected to discussions among the musicians and facilitators. The objective of these debates, though, was not to discuss national identity as such, but rather to illuminate how identity is constructed through a wide range of notions.³²

Focusing on national identity solely, I will argue that this aspect has a much stronger role in the negotiations in the Divan than what the founders, Foundation

³² An aspect that is increasingly important when it is applied to the political situation of the Middle East, where both nationality, religion and ethnicity are central identity notions. See for example Owen 2000 and Milton-Edwards 2000 for a general overview, Eickelman and Piscatori 1996 for discussions on Muslim politics and the linkage between religion and politics and Shafir and Peled 2002 for a discussion of identity in Israel.

and Barenboim as actor have recognized, and I will use this chapter to illuminate some factors that support this argument. To understand one of the reasons why nationality not has been a topic Barenboim and Said aimed to alter, we need to look carefully at the cosmopolitanism represented by Barenboim and to a certain extent by Said. This might be an interesting explanation for the lack of focus on national identity in this project, if we understand cosmopolitanism as an alternative to a nationalist social orientation (with the cultural organization this sponsors) (for example see Hylland Eriksen and Finess Tretvoll 2006). I will return to the aspect of cosmopolitanism not only in this chapter, but also in Chapter 5, with regard to empowerment in the Divan.

I will start by presenting theories on the orchestra as an institution and drawing a parallel between the orchestra and the nation. Despite the fact that national identity in this chapter is dealt with as identity that draws its legitimacy from the nation as a spatial construct, I believe making a comparison between the orchestra with its leadership on the one side and civil society and the nation state on the other, offers an interesting starting point for the following discussion. Further on I will present the background of Said and Barenboim with regard to cosmopolitanism and exile, before I enter the musicians' narratives of national identity and how these are negotiated in various ways in the orchestra. The analytical framework defined in Chapter 1 is applied throughout.

The orchestra and the nation

Carter and Levi argue that there are two possible definitions of the orchestra; (1) a corporation of instrumental musicians, and (2) a corporate musical instrument (Carter and Levi 2003: 1). According to them, the difference is “that of the orchestra as an institution and as a sounding body” (ibid: 1).

An orchestra understood as a corporation of musical instrumentalists, an institution with its cross-section of people from all kinds of social backgrounds, can be linked to metaphors as a *microcosm* (Gillinson and Vaughan 2003: 194) or a *civil society* (Spizer and Zaslaw 2004: 509). Barenboim argues that the orchestra is a model for society, and names the Divan Orchestra an *alternative social model* and a *utopian republic* (Barenboim 2006: BBC Reith Lecture, Lecture 1 and 5). I wish to assign these metaphors to the Divan Orchestra; juxtapose the orchestra as institution with the nation state, focusing on identity creation within these

institutions. This parallel does not only exist on a metaphorical level; it is also reflected in the way the Divan musicians live their lives and play music together at the workshop as if they were in an alternative society.³³

Within the orchestra as an institution, we need to investigate what happens when people play together in an ensemble, based on the individual's role within the orchestra. Barenboim explains in his BBC Reith Lectures that when you play music in an ensemble, you have to do two things at the same time: (1) express yourself, otherwise you are not contributing to the musical experience, and (2) listen to the other; you have to understand what the others are doing (Barenboim 2006: BBC Reith Lectures 2006, Lecture 1). Furthermore, music makes every Divan musician equal (*ibid*):

There is automatically a common terrain on the music, because in front of the Beethoven symphony they are all equals. In real life they are not.

Through music, then, the orchestra as an institution provides the Divan musicians a democratic space where they are all equal. The musicians are thus not only in a 'stand-still' equality, rather, this equality assigns a possibility for narrative-expression, negotiations and construction of relationships, leading to new notions of identity (See Small 1998). A similar argument is also put forward by Bennett, who argues that music can "[...] provide a shared sense of collective identity articulated by a symbolic sense of community" (Bennett 2004: 4).

Also Barenboim and Said emphasize the role of playing music together in the constitution of new relationships; "because once you have agreed on how to play one note together you can no longer look at each other the same way again, because you then have shared the same experience" (Barenboim and Said 2002: 10). This is a postcolonial way of understanding the role of music in identity creation, where music holds a formative role in identity construction. The founders understand music as the musicians' "abstract language of harmony" (Barenboim 2006: BBC Reith Lectures 2006, Lecture 4). The narratives are told in this abstract language, which might, according to Barenboim and Said, lead to understanding, curiosity, and in the very end perhaps even lead to the acceptance of the legitimacy of the narrative.

I will argue that besides expressing and listening to one another's narrative,

³³ As we will see later, the civil society of the Divan has also carried out some democratic processes.

the Divan musicians also create a new, shared narrative through music, from where the new notions of social identity draws its legitimacy (and it is this that makes it possible to define the musicians as a homogenous actor). This is in line with postcolonial theories, that acknowledge the formative role of music in the construction, negotiation, and transformation of sociocultural identities (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 31; see also Stokes 1994 and Frith 1996). Through playing the same piece of music, everyone participates in and negotiates the creation of a more complex and nuanced narrative they can have in common. Frith emphasizes the role of music in the creation of a group; how a cultural activity is a way of living the ideas of the group (Frith 1996: 111):

[...] Is not that social groups agree on values which are then expressed in their cultural activities (the assumption of the homology models), but that they only get to know themselves as groups (as a particular organization of individual and social interests, of sameness and difference) through cultural activity, through aesthetic judgment. Making music is not a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them.

The negotiation of common identity within the orchestra does not only refer to the immediate action of playing music together, but to the importance of doing so over time. Returning to the parallel between civil society and the orchestra. The definition of civil society is not consistent and has varied over time. As the discussion is a vast one, and has been done at length elsewhere, I will not enter a thorough discussion of the definitions of civil society, but rather clarify my use of the term. For many, civil society refers mainly to voluntary associations and NGOs³⁴ in the society, sponsoring what Edwards calls the missing link in the democracy (Edwards 2005). However, as Edwards argues, civil society should include all places where learning takes place, and it can include the public sphere of society as such (ibid). My use of the term suggests a sphere where learning takes place, a space informed by its leadership and still a place with its own processes and negotiations. So the orchestra: by playing together as a corporation of musical instrumentalists, the musicians are brought together in what we might call a 'civil society', and within this corporation the musicians negotiate a common ground based on the new relationships and a negotiated narrative informing a common social identity. With the variety of lived-experiences creating the musicians'

³⁴ NGOs = Non Governmental Organisations.

narratives, “Living their shared values,” to use Frith’s words, requires negotiations.

Making a parallel between the civil society of the nation state and the orchestra may ultimately question whether the Divan Orchestra on the one side and the Middle Eastern states on the other are juxtaposed or competing structures in informing the notions of national identity of the Divan musicians. I will return to this aspect after presenting another important aspect of the orchestra and the nation, namely the leadership.

Leading the orchestra

The second definition of the orchestra, as a corporate musical instrument, a sounding body (Carter and Levi 2003: 1) offers an interesting starting point for a discussion of the role of the orchestra’s leadership. At one level, Siepmann argues, the conductor’s “first duty is to keep order, and the larger the orchestra, the greater his authority must be” (Siepmann 2003: 113). It is the conductor that interprets the musical pieces and defines the musical expression of the orchestra, making the orchestra the conductor’s corporate musical instrument his sounding body. Interesting in the context of musical leadership is Attali’s argument that the conductor is not only the “legitimate and rational organizer of a production whose size necessitates a coordinator,” he also holds an enormous power over the orchestra as society (Attali [1985] 2006: 65-67).

Witnessing the arrival of Barenboim at the 2008 workshop made me realize the strong sense of leadership that reigns in the Divan. With strong leadership I do not only mean authoritarian leadership, but also leadership characterized by strong senses of respect and admiration. Among some of the musicians this also led to a feeling of being afraid of Barenboim. Before Barenboim arrived at the workshop, I had been present at several tutti rehearsals,³⁵ seeing how the orchestra responded to the assistant conductor’s attempts to shaping the musical expression and the sound of the orchestra. The musicians often openly commented that they were not inspired, that the rehearsals were too long, that the other instrumental groups required too much time at the rehearsals and so on. In other words; I witnessed many negative comments on the rehearsals directed to both me, the

³⁵ A tutti rehearsal is a rehearsal for the whole orchestra with all instrument sections, deriving from the Italian word *tutto* (singular) ‘all’ (New Oxford American Dictionary 2008: “Tutti”).

fellow orchestra members and even more to the assistant conductor.³⁶ When Barenboim came to the workshop and entered the tutti rehearsal, the orchestra as whole changed drastically. Those who previous sat leaning back on the chair now sat straight upward, listened carefully to what Barenboim said, and concentrated on playing exactly how Barenboim asked them to play. From my interpretation of this situation, Barenboim exercised clear, strong leadership of the orchestra, and took the position Siepmann has named *The conductor as evangelist*; “preaching to the converted” (Siepmann 2003: 122-125). Along with my interpretation of Barenboim’s leadership, several of my informants underlined the strong leadership of Barenboim, and how this forms a central aspect of the Divan. One said:

Informant: I think the music making is in the highest level possible. It is very interesting to work with Barenboim, and we work with him in a very special way. He has a lot of time to work with us; it’s not as in a professional orchestra, where he comes for four rehearsals and then play concert. There he doesn’t really have time to work and do everything he wants with the orchestra. With us he has time, so we play exactly how he hears the music. He explains to us exactly what he wants, and we try to do it as best as we can. This is very interesting I think.

A central question related to our discussion should be ‘what is it that Barenboim wishes to express musically and ideologically through the Divan Orchestra?’ Making the orchestra as musically strong as possible might help Barenboim express both music and possibly also political ideas. Being a good instrument for Barenboim, the orchestra gives Barenboim and the musicians an opportunity to use what he calls “the universal language of music,” and it offers a space to outwardly express their ideas. Understood this way, we might question whether the musicians get to participate in the negotiation of the musical narratives the orchestra performs. Are the musicians only a tool for the ‘actor in charge’ to express the ideas of Barenboim and the foundation? And if so, what effect does this have in negotiating a new narrative informing the new social identity of the musicians?

In a discussion of the conductor’s role in the orchestra, Barenboim argues that: “You cannot separate the leaders from the people,” this making a parallel to a

³⁶ Several times during these tutti rehearsals, Barenboim listened to the orchestra through a cell phone held up by one of Barenboim’s assistants.

state and its leadership³⁷ (Barenboim 2006: BBC Reith Lectures 2006, Lecture 5). He continues:

And you cannot only criticize the leaders. You know, the same thing in the orchestra. [...] I make mistakes when I conduct. [...] When I make mistakes the musicians usually cover up for me

Although Barenboim argues that you cannot separate the leaders from their people, and hence the conductor from its orchestra, I wish to enter the following discussion bearing in questioning the juxtaposition of negotiations taking place between the musicians on the one side, and, on the other, the ideas of Barenboim (musically and orally) expressed through the orchestra as a sounding body. Or to use the already introduced metaphor: are the participants in civil society and their leader going in the same direction? What is the role of the leader in pointing out the direction for his or her people? And ultimately, on what will the negotiations be based?

Reflections on exile

Nationality has never been something Said and Barenboim included in their ideas of negotiations in the Divan. At the same time, we can read from previous stories about the orchestra and from my findings that nationality plays a central role among the musicians in some way or another. To understand the concept of national identity in the Divan Orchestra I believe we need to start with the two founders' ideas of national identity. Both have, through books with descriptive titles such as "Out of place. A Memoir" (Said 1999), "Reflections on exile" (Said 2001) and "A life in music" (Barenboim [1991] 2002) contributed to the discussion about nationality as a core identity marker.

Both Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim state that they do not feel any national belonging; as Barenboim answers to the question "Where do you feel at home?" in their joint *Parallels and Paradoxes* (Barenboim and Said 2002: 3-4):

The used and abused cliché "I'm at home wherever I make music" is true. [...]

³⁷ In this case the parallel is made between the orchestra/ conductor and Israel and its leadership, as part of a political argument on the role of Israel in the Middle Eastern conflicts.

Wherever I can play the piano - preferably with a reasonably good instrument - or wherever I travel with the orchestras that I lead, the Chicago Symphony or the Staatskapelle from Berlin, I feel at home. I feel home in a certain way in Jerusalem, but I think this is a bit unreal, a poetic idea with which I grew up with. [...] Otherwise, I feel at home in the company of a very few close friends. And, I must say, Edward to me has become the one friend with whom I can share so many things, a soul mate. I feel very at home when I am with him.

This rather postmodern way of talking about nationality as an identity marker can also be found in Said's answer to the same question: "One of my earliest memories is of homesickness, of wishing I was somewhere else. But over time, I've come to the view of home being overrated" (ibid: 4). In his book "Out of Place. A Memoir" (1999) Said concludes that identity is a set of flowing currents rather than a strong, fixed place, and that he in fact prefers being "out of place" (Said 1999: 283). Writing about Barenboim, Said states "Another reason for Barenboim being at home everywhere and nowhere is that he seems capable of being at ease in many contrasting cosmopolitan locales [...]" (Barenboim and Said 2002: 178).

In sum, both present a picture of their own identity where nationality as identity marker is replaced by other, more individual markers such as music or friendship. In other words, *place* as identity marker is replaced or superseded by *space*. Bennett argues that the contested nature of space and place in late modernity has been accentuated in recent decades by increasing global mobility (Bennett 2004: 3, see also Edensor 2002). Both Said and Barenboim are obvious examples of the human effect of the global mobility, and as shown in the introduction they are also a human example of the history of the Middle East and the British (European) influence in that area.

Nationality has thus been subjected to what we might call the political *strategy* of Barenboim. After a Beethoven piano recital in Ramallah in the West Bank in January 2008, Barenboim received honorary Palestinian citizenship, and hence became the first man in the world to carry both an Israeli and a Palestinian passport.³⁸ In an article commenting on the dual citizenship, Barenboim writes (URL: http://www.danielbarenboim.com/journal_acceptance2.htm):

I have often made the statement that the destinies of the Israeli and Palestinian

³⁸ Additionally, he is a citizen of Spain and Argentina.

people are inextricably linked and that there is no military solution to the conflict. My recent acceptance of Palestinian nationality has given me the opportunity to demonstrate this more tangibly. [...] For my part, when the Palestinian passport was offered to me, I accepted it in the spirit of acknowledging the Palestinian destiny which I, as an Israeli, share. A true citizen of Israel must reach out to the Palestinian people with openness, and at the very least an attempt to understand what the creation of the state of Israel has meant to them. [...] After all, in the sense that we share one land and one destiny, we should all have dual citizenship.

Barenboim argues that holding dual citizenship demonstrates his politically loaded ideas of the linked destinies of the Israelis and Palestinians. Furthermore he argues that the state of Israel is confronted with three problems that all deals with identity: the nature of the modern democratic Jewish state and its very identity; the problem of Palestinian identity within Israel; and lastly the problem of the creation of a Palestinian state outside of Israel (ibid). We can see that Barenboim does not deal with nationalism as an individual marker of identity, rather as a political statement that includes nation state identity and group identity.

Divan Nationalism

While the two founders have quite explicit ideas of the role of national *place*-identity-markers in their own personal histories, this can also be shown in how the two present the identities of the orchestra member (Barenboim and Said 2002: 9-10, talking about the first Weimar workshop):

One set of identities was superseded by another set. There was an Israeli group, and a Russian group, and a Syrian group, a Lebanese group, and a group of Palestinian Israelis. All of them suddenly became cellists and violinists playing the same piece in the same orchestra under the same conductor.

In other words, they argue orchestra and the music played holds a formative role in creating a new social identity; hence the orchestra transgresses the identity informed by the nation-state of origin. In line with the founders' personal experience in replacing the nation with *space*-notions of identity, they argue that the orchestra is a space which supersedes the national identity. Nonetheless, during my stay in Pilas in July/August 2008, I found that country of origin serves

as a central identity marker for the musicians. As one of my informants put it:

Informant: This is who I am. Especially here, because of this Arab-Israeli thing, so of course, it's more noticeable who's Israeli and who's Arab here. I mean, of course, more than in normal time in Germany.

This is one example of many, where musicians informed me how the Divan in fact strengthens their sense of national identity rather than altering it. From what I saw at the 2008 workshop, Said and Barenboim statement about superseded identities is true when it comes to the musicians' social sense of belonging to the orchestra. A small example of this is how the musicians all took on the Divan 2008 T-shirt they were given on one of the last days at the workshop. The T-shirt visually unified the musicians as members of the same corporation of musical instrumentalists, and that symbolically showed that the musicians were proud of being Divan-musicians.

When it comes to the identity discussion, it is important to keep in mind that the Divan Orchestra is not only an orchestra, but also a context for discussion of topics about art, literature, music, and to a certain extent politics. Hence, social activity among the Divan-musicians needs to be included in a discussion about national identity, as national identity also carries aspects of groupings and "otherness" with it, and serves as a "natural" social structuring among the musicians. When I asked if there were any unofficial discussions among the musicians after the arranged, official discussions, one of the informants of Arab origin said to me:

Informant: Usually we have talks, but not necessarily in the discussion. Usually we have another discussion after the discussion, outside. It's like a section of the discussions which leads to another discussion.

Interviewer: This second discussion you talked about, is this between you and the other fellow citizens, or is it...

Informant: No. Sometimes it is with my [constituencies] and sometimes with Israelis; it happened a few times with some Israelis and of course with Arabs. We would be complaining about things to each other, we would say for example "Did you hear what this guy said?" Sometimes we discuss with the Israelis.

We see here how the musician structured social groupings in three levels: first and

foremost his constituencies as a unifying, national identity marker, secondly Arabs (as a broader, “allied” ethnic group³⁹), and thirdly, the “real” other, the Israelis. This division is only true when it comes to the social activity and organization of the musicians; I saw tendencies towards this way of social structure for example during the meals at the workshop, where the majority of the tables were occupied by either only Arabs or only Israelis. However, in the orchestra Barenboim, the founders and the Foundation make sure the musicians stand with “the other.”

National identity plays an important role for the musicians in the discussion. It may refer to how they serve as “ambassadors” for their country of origin, supporting the country’s actions with regard to the conflict. Or it may refer to what he or she has learned to believe is right through media coverage of the regional political issues, and through books and the education system. The informant above told me that the education system in his country emphasized teaching the students that Israel is the enemy. “And suddenly you are face to face with them [at the Divan-workshop],” he said. Another informant told me that in his country he is usually regarded as “left-wing” in politics, but in the Divan Orchestra, when his country is being criticized, he feels the need of defending his country, and hence he never got to present what he called “the whole picture.” In other words, he functions as an ambassador of his country’s actions and policies, rather than coming to the Divan as an independent young musician.

The Wagner Taboo

The Divan Orchestra program of 2008 included, among others, the first act of Wagner’s *Die Walküre*. The state of Israel has informally banned Richard Wagner’s music, as this has become a symbol of the horrors of German anti-Semitism (Said 2002: 175). As a natural result of this, live performances of Wagner’s music do not happen easily in Israel. Furthermore, for an Israeli musician to perform Wagner, in Israel or elsewhere, is a complicated matter, inasmuch as the ban is a result of an interpretation of Wagner’s music as a symbol of German anti-Semitism.

³⁹ Coherence among the Arabs has its roots in being viewed as one ethnic group, furthermore it has its modern political roots in the Middle Eastern history of (Pan) Arabism and Arab nationalism as a political idea which reached its peak with the formation of the United Arab Republic between Egypt and Syria in 1958, and again in 1963, with the establishment of a new super-state: Egypt, Syria and Iraq (Owen 2000: 69, see also Choueiri 2000)

The Divan playing Wagner in the midst of Israel's informal ban fosters an important discussion within the field of national identity, especially when it comes to the Israeli musicians of the Divan Orchestra. To contextualize the discussion of Wagner I will start by presenting what Said called "Barenboim and the Wagner Taboo." Further on I will present the musicians' opinions on playing Wagner and an explicit story from one of the previous Divan workshops, before I set this into the context of national identity.

In July 2001, Barenboim was the first conductor to perform Wagner in Israel. Barenboim underlines his full respect for the associations Wagner's music brings to the Holocaust survivors of Israel (Barenboim [1991] 2002: 228-229). Still, he argues, the informal ban on Wagner in Israel deprives those who do not have the same associations of hearing Wagner's music. Based on an argument that Israel should act as a democratic state, Barenboim decided to make the audience decide whether they wanted to listen to a Wagner performance. Said's article "Barenboim and the Wagner Taboo" is written as a result of the reactions in Israel after Barenboim and the Berliner Philharmoniker played an extract from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* as an encore in a concert in Israel on July 7, 2001. This performance led to a politically tense discussion in Israel. Barenboim had originally scheduled a performance of Act 1 of Wagner's *Die Walküre* for the concert, but was explicitly asked not to perform Wagner by the director of the Israeli Festival (Said 2002: 176).

After having performed the official program, which was changed as requested, to a performance of Stravinsky and Schumann, Barenboim addressed the audience and proposed a performance of *Prelude* and *Liebestod* from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* as an encore. Following the previously mentioned argument for Israeli democracy, Barenboim underlines that he did not want to play Wagner for an audience that was unprepared for it, and therefore opened the floor for discussion. After 40 minutes of discussion Barenboim told the audiences that those who were offended by the upcoming performance were allowed to leave the hall. Some twenty or thirty people walked out (Barenboim [1991] 2002: 229), but the majority stayed, and according to Said, the Wagner was well received by "a rapturous audience of about twenty-eight hundred Israelis" (Said 2002: 176). As Barenboim put it: "...the rest stayed and gave us a standing ovation at the end, which gave me the feeling that we had done something positive" (Barenboim [1991] 2002: 229-230). Along the same line as Barenboim, Said's argument held

that ignorance is not an adequate political strategy for a people; there should always be room for dissent, for alternative views, for “ways and possibilities to challenge the tyranny of the majority, and, at the same time and most importantly, to advance human enlightenment and liberty” (Said 2002: 181). Following these arguments, what Barenboim did was to engage the audience in a democratic process, which lead to another result than the one the state of Israel defended by maintaining the informal Wagner banning.

A boycott of Barenboim, however, followed as a result of this performance. The Knesset⁴⁰ committee of culture and education “urged Israel’s cultural bodies to boycott the conductor [...] for performing Hitler’s favorite composer at Israel’s premier cultural event until he apologies” (statement from the Knesset July 25, 2001, cited in Said 2002: 176-177⁴¹). What makes this story even more interesting is the fact that the scandal was organized by people who were not present at the concert but who had some political agenda (Barenboim [1991] 2002: 230). The ban of Wagner’s music and following boycott of Barenboim was used by the governing political forces of Israel to foster internal sense of belonging among the (Israelis and) Jews in Israel, and following define a common “enemy.” In other words, Wagner’s music is used as a comparative device within Israeli Jews as a social group, which implies use of music for behavior control at some level (See Brown and Volgsten 2006: 3). As Stokes puts it (Stokes 1994: 10):

Music is intensely involved in the propagation of dominant classifications, and has been a tool in the hands of new states in the developing world, or rather, of those classes which have the highest stake in these new social formations.

The Divan-orchestra, named an “alternative utopian republic” by Barenboim, has also used Wagner’s music in the creation of new social formation where identity is negotiated and among many altered. At the 2008 Divan workshop I was told that the first time the orchestra played Wagner, Barenboim opened a discussion of this

⁴⁰ Knesset is the Israeli Parliament, established in 1949.

⁴¹ When searching for the primary source at the Knesset web site I continued to receive an error message. This implies that I cannot reach the site because I am not in Israel; or it implies technical problems; it might also simply be because the link does not exist, or, lastly, I do not reach the site due to security reasons. The URL suggests the latter (error_secure_problem), the title of the page suggests a non-existing page (Link does not exist), and the text on the page suggests a technical problem (“The page you have tried to reach is experiencing a temporary technical problem. Please try again later”) URL: http://www.knesset.gov.il/error_secure_problem.asp (accessed October 5, 6 and 7, 2008).

matter among the Israelis.⁴² According to my informants, the discussion ended in a vote among the Israeli musicians, who with a one vote majority decided to play Wagner. This discussion was seen as the final decision among the Divan members, also for the newcomers, who had to adapt and accept the decision made on their behalf. I would nonetheless argue that the decision of performing Wagner's music was also taken by Barenboim in a more undemocratic manner. For according to Beckles Willson, who was present at the 2006 workshop, Barenboim surprised the musicians by inviting the mezzo soprano Waltraud Meier to sing Isolde's part during an originally scheduled instrumental tutti rehearsal. As Beckles Willson put it (Beckles Willson 2009: 35-36):

Unknown to most of the orchestra, mezzo soprano Waltraud Meier had arrived in order to begin rehearsals for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Barenboim asked her to sit among the observers, but to be ready to sing. When he began to rehearse the Wagner she slowly stepped out, walked towards the orchestra and began to sing Isolde's part.

By doing this, Barenboim took one step further towards a full performance of Wagner's music, which was made reality by the 2008 performance of the first act of *Die Walküre*. As I argued in the beginning of this chapter, it is important to question whether the people in the orchestra (the civil society) and their leader are going in the same direction, and furthermore clarifying the role of the leader in pointing out the direction for the musicians. In the example of Wagner, one might say that Barenboim succeeded in his agenda; at the 2008 workshop playing Wagner was not discussed officially (though it was to a certain extent a topic in the conversations among the musicians), but rather taken for granted and as an obvious choice of music for an orchestra on this level. As one of my informants said:

Informant: No, playing Wagner really goes without saying. You know, you do something once, and then you rely on this time, and you do it again and again, and you don't have to ask again. Even though that there are different people coming now.

Nonetheless, some Israeli musicians told me they were personally offended by

⁴² In 2005 and 2006 the Divan had the instrumental parts Prelude and Liebestod from *Tristan and Isolde* on their encore programme, similarly to the "Barenboim and the Wagner Taboo"-history.

playing Wagner, many of them referring to their grandparents being Holocaust survivors. Several Israelis stated that they fully respect the banning of Wagner in Israel, and that they would not play Wagner in Israel even if they were asked. In my opinion, this is not only an example of the complexity in the Divan, this shows how the politically organized banning in order to maintain a common identity based on common history is still alive and fully respected among the third generation Holocaust survivors and Israeli Jews:

Informant: If they would ask me to play Wagner in Israel, I would say no, of course. I would say no because it is forbidden to play Wagner in Israel, and wouldn't like to provoke. Barenboim played Wagner in Israel; it was a big scandal, and I'm against it. But to play Wagner here is no problem.

Edensor states that national identity can be reconstructed in diaspora, can forge new cultural constructions of difference out of the confrontation with otherness, and not only in a recursive fashion (Edensor 2002: 39). Although it is wrong to call Israel the diaspora (diaspora referring to the Jews outside Israel, also used as a more general term for dispersion of people from their original homeland), Edensor's point is interesting in the context of Israel's informal Wagner ban. The state of Israel, being a relatively young state, draws its cultural heritage from all parts of the world through Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews alongside with Israeli Arabs (see below). At the same time the state strives towards creating a national identity or *Israeliness*. As Regey and Seroussi point out (2004: 2), ever since the early days of the Zionist settlements those we now recognize as Israelis have believed that Israel should have a culture on its own.⁴³ However, and because for the early Zionist pioneers in Palestine, this culture had to be different from traditional Jewish cultures forged in the diaspora; in other words, *Israeliness* needed to be constructed or "invented."

In the same book, Regey and Seroussi argues that popular music has come to stand as a musical symbol of *Israeliness*, and that it represents a convincing "proof" of the existence of *Israeliness* as an indigenous cultural entity (ibid: 2). However, when it comes to the classical musical heritage in general, and Wagner in

⁴³ "That is, it should have a set of cultural practices and artworks that, as an exclusive body of contents and meanings, expresses the uniqueness and specificity of *Israeliness*, and that it is through routine practice of and intimate acquaintance with this unique world of contents and meanings that *Israeliness* at both individual and collective levels come into being" (Regey and Seroussi 2004: 2).

particular, Israel is faced with challenging notions of history, culture and tradition, some of which the dominant group of Jews has suffered under. The division between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews need to be considered when dealing with the informal Wagner banning.⁴⁴ For whereas the highest ranking internal cleavage in Israel is that between Jews and Arabs (see Shafir and Peled 2002: 30-31 and Lefkowitz 2004: 274), there is also a division between Jews of European decent (Ashkenazi Jews) and Jews of Middle Eastern decent (Mizrahi Jews).⁴⁵ In addition to the group of Israeli Arabs, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews are two of the three groups competing for the emergent of Israeli identity (Lefkowitz 2004: 16). Being the dominant group, it has been the cultural heritage of Ashkenazi Jews sponsoring the European heritage in Israel, and it is inevitably from this dominance the informal banning of Wagner derives.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, European classical music is part of Israeli heritage and culture, and the impact of this heritage for the state and its citizens' sense of national identity has, with Edensor's words "been reconstructed in diaspora." The Wagner ban functions as a reconstruction of a common identity in Israel based on shared history informed by Ashkenazi dominance. By banning Wagner's music, the state of Israel constructs a cultural identity based on difference and disassociation from the horrors of German anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, this is done in a recursive fashion; rather than creating an Israeliness, European Judaism (with the history this features) is used the source for national identity creation. Also Barenboim calls for a reconstruction of national identity in Israel (Barenboim [1991] 2002: 230):

The whole debate about Wagner is linked to the fact that we have not yet made the transition into being Israeli Jews, and that we cling to all sorts of associations with the past [...] as a way of reminding ourselves of our own Judaism.

In their book "Palestine, Israel and the politics of popular culture" (2005), Stein and Swedenburg argue that the question of popular culture in Palestine and Israel is fundamentally one of politics and power. Drawing their theories from the

⁴⁴ Mizrahi as an identity category in Israel overlaps with Sfardi much the way Palestinian overlaps with Arab. See Lefkowitz 2004: 274, 9.

⁴⁵ Mizrahi Jews and Israeli Arabs share affinities of socioeconomic class and cultural heritage, whereas Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews share religious and national affinities (Lefkowitz 2004: 90).

⁴⁶ This dominance also derives from Legacies from Labour settlement movement (freely translated by Shafir and Peled from Hebrew: *Hityashvut ovedet*) dominance - a European colonial project excluding Mizrachim, Palestinian Arabs and women from its benefits (Shafir and Peled 2002: 2).

Birmingham Cultural Studies school and Stuart Hall, the writers suggest that culture in Israel, particularly popular culture, is a terrain of power and struggle that articulates with broader social forces. The informal ban of Wagner (although Wagner cannot be said to be part of the popular music field) is another example on how culture is fundamentally a question of power and politics between the competing groups in Israel. The Wagner debate is part of a broader discussion of national identity in Israel, which in turn is a question of who has the power and politics in shaping and strengthening what Regey and Serouss have called a 'constructed Israeliness.'

In the "utopian republic" of the Divan Orchestra, despite the strides towards renegotiating the identity foundation, the same recursiveness was found among some of the musicians. One of my informants, who was not present at the Wagner-vote told me how he both identify with the Wagner ban and with being a Holocaust survivor:

Informant: As you know we're playing Meistersinger. If you check on You-Tube you will find a recording with Furtwängler, he's conducting it, and on the background you see all the Nazi posters - fabric posters, I don't know exactly how to call it, but it's very bad. Especially for me, because I come from a survivor family from the Holocaust, and that's... it is a problem. I feel bad with it, yes.

Interviewer: But will you go on stage with it?

Informant: Yes, it's no democracy here. They didn't ask me. If they asked me I'd say maybe this not, another piece yes. You see, the problem with Wagner is that it's not the music that is anti Jewish, Wagner himself wrote anti Jewish things. He was anti Semitic. He was not Nazi because it was no Nazi party in his time, but if it had been he would probably be the 'Führer.' He had very clear thoughts about that.

This is an example on how national identity and the cultural heritage it inhabits is not easily altered, not even in the Divan; despite the democratic solution on playing Wagner, the Israeli musicians bring with them identity markers that make them Israeli. The Wagner discussion can even be strengthening the sense of Israeli national identity among some of the musicians; the musicians are forced to take an active stand and consider going against something that is originally thought of as a "normal" aspect of the Israeli national identity ("constructed Israeliness"), namely

the informal banning of Wagner.

The obvious question that arises, then, is what instance that inhabits the most power. As we have seen, by being a “utopian republic” the Divan Orchestra is in position to negotiate its own sense of identity among the musicians, which could transgress or supersede the musician’s sense of national identity. On the other side, the Divan is established on the condition of national identity, and as we have seen, debates that arise among the musicians can ultimately function as a strengthening force in their original sense of national identity and belonging. The Wagner discussion might eventually compel the musicians to choose between the Divan identity and the national identity they carry with them; and so the orchestra as an institution and the nation state are not only juxtaposed, but in fact competing identity notions. When so much political power and ideology are put behind the informal banning of Wagner in Israel, it is at least understandable that some of the musicians chose the Israeli way, as this is what inhabits the most power.

When all comes to an end, the debate centers on a separation between the ideas of Wagner and the music of Wagner. As Said puts it (Said 2002: 175 ⁴⁷):

None of Wagner’s operas have any immediately anti-Semitic material in them; more bluntly, the Jews he hated and wrote about in his pamphlets are simply not at all to be found *as Jews* or Jewish characters in his musical works.

Whereas the musicians appreciate Wagner’s music, and at the same time talk about their disassociation with his ideas, the informal Israeli ban suggests that these two aspects are inseparable.⁴⁸ The main argument of Said is exactly a separation of Wagner’s ideas and music; he states that the challenge Wagner presents is how to admire and perform his music on the one hand, and other hand, to separate from his odious writings and the use made of them by the Nazis (ibid). Not all the musicians, however, find this separation as easily done as said:

Informant: Well it’s good music, we must separate things. It is good music, and we

⁴⁷ See also Guldbrandsen 1998.

⁴⁸ The official Israeli rationale behind the banning is the following (Guldbrandsen 1998, referring to Professor Yoram Dinstein, my translation): “(1) Wagner’s writings about Judaism; (2) the use of Wagner’s music in the nazi era; and (3) what happened in Bayreuth in 1933-1945, where Hitler, among others, was a special guest and friend of festival director Winifred Wagner.”

try to eliminate things. The thing with me is that I believe, I am a spiritual person, the music goes through us. And it's not only divine, we have filters from above. The moment that his energy passes through it, something of him went into it. Therefore I don't think I should give him extra stage to say what he has to say, because they are anti what I believe in. So the more I speak with you the more I understand I shouldn't be playing it. No matter what. Anything he wrote should not be played by me. There are enough other great composers in the world that I could play for eternity and I wouldn't have to obstacle myself with the piece.

Although it was never my intention to force or lead this musician towards the decision of not playing Wagner, my questions regarding the Wagner performances lead this musician to believe that by playing Wagner he would also give Wagner's ideas a stage, hence the separation he calls for between Wagner's ideas and music was revised. In other words, our conversation led the informant towards the Israeli view on this matter, where performance of Wagner equals giving his anti-Semitic ideas a stage. As I showed in the presentation "The orchestra and the nation," Said and Barenboim argue that the musicians express a narrative while playing together; they both express their own narrative and listen to the narratives of others, and as I argued, they create a shared narrative that informs their common sense of identity. According to these theories, to play music is to express a narrative. The informant above believed that playing Wagner was to give his ideas a stage; in other words to perform the narrative of Wagner. This is an example of the complex and diverse the narratives of the Divan musicians, which shows the challenges the musicians are facing in their ongoing negotiations through nation-based narratives.

To sum up, the Wagner taboo in Israel and among some of the musicians presents an important arena in which national identity is both constructed and strengthened, and is a matter that inevitably involves questions of power and politics. In the following, I will discuss another aspect of national identity sponsoring the negotiations in the Divan Orchestra. Under the headline "Becoming German" I would like to present some ways the Divan musicians exist in voluntarily musical exile.

Becoming German

Through the Foundation, the Divan musicians are offered scholarships. At the

Foundation's web site we read the following (URL: <http://www.barenboim-said.org/index.php?id=231>):

The scholarships will be awarded for musical training projects or for the purchase of instruments. The West-Eastern Divan project thus completes its programme of training activities once the workshop and the concert tour are over, allowing the most outstanding performers to continue their musical development. These scholarships are granted in order to continue the spirit of the project by supporting talented young people from the Middle East and Spain and to train them in and through music.

Furthermore, we read that the awarding committee, which consists of Barenboim and two teachers from the workshop, consider the student performances at the Divan workshop and tour when granting scholarships. A total amount of € 150.000 is awarded every year (ibid), and in 2007/2008 a total of 27 musicians were studying in Berlin with the support of the Foundation (URL: <http://www1.nrk.no/nett-tv/klipp/401351>).⁴⁹

By granting scholarships, the Foundation contributes to the young musicians' development as musicians. The lack of high-level music education in the Middle East makes most of the musicians apply for scholarships for study abroad, mainly in Germany. Granting scholarships for studies in Europe is also one of the objectives for the Foundation (URL: <http://www.barenboim-said.org/index.php?id=158>). From discussing this matter with several Divan musicians at the 2008 workshop, I found that not only are the musicians studying abroad for a limited time, many of them take residence in the country for a longer time, and many of the musicians told me that they did not intend to move back to the Middle East at all. Reaching a satisfactory level of musical skills by studying in Europe, the Divan musicians wish for a musical career as professional orchestra musicians or soloists, which is not easily accomplished in the Middle East as there are fewer professional orchestras in the region.

I would like to open the discussion on this matter by suggesting that this scholarship not only promotes "brain-drain," but that it also plays an important role as an external source for negotiating the musician's sense of national identity

⁴⁹ I never got the total number of musicians studying abroad, as this information was not given to me for security reasons. Several of my informants told me they were living abroad, also without scholarships from the Foundation.

in the same way that exile has negotiated Said and Barenboim's national identity. One of my informants said to me "Living in Germany makes it difficult to me to say that I'm 100% [states his country of origin]."

Given the fact that the musicians engage themselves with music of European or Western heritage, the citation above requires that we look carefully at whether the musical genre is constructing a notion of identity not immediately coherent with the source for national identity for the musicians. The music of the Divan might invoke senses of identity that ultimately vitiates the musicians' national identity and replaces it with another sense of identity connected to another place and space. Stokes argues that the dynamics of politics and music should not only be regarded as something that happens in society, as a separate sphere or arena within society. This notion of society should also be seen as a thing that happens in music (Stokes 1994: 2). Through music, we see society, and define our relationship to it. This becomes clear when we think about "how music creates or informs our sense of place," Stokes argues (*ibid*: 3). Or as Bennett notes (Bennett 2004: 2):

Both as creative practice and as form of consumption, music plays an important role in the narrativization of place, that is, in the way in which people define their relationship to local, everyday surroundings.

The 'places' constructed through music help unveiling and organizing senses of differences between social groups. On the other side, and as already introduced, Said argues that the Western art music has globalized. According to these theories, it becomes difficult to maintain a view on the music informing the sense of place and our relation to it. Based on the information I gathered at the 2008 workshop, it seems that by offering scholarships to the talented Divan musicians, the Foundation contributes to informing new notions, or to use Stokes' term, 'relationships' with a new place. This place might ultimately result in a distance to the Middle East as the primary place informing their identity. At the Foundation's web site, we read that the scholarships result in strengthening the orchestras of the Middle East, among them the Cairo Opera and the Damascus Symphony Orchestra. However, the majority of the scholarship recipients never return to the Middle East, hence the ideological basis for the scholarships is at stake. The Foundation states that (URL: <http://www.barenboim-said.org/index.php?id=158>):

Every year, the Junta de Andalucía grants scholarships to particularly talented musicians to study in Europe or the USA. These scholarships allow some specially talented students with limited financial resources to access an excellent musical education. Some of the recipients of these scholarships now hold positions with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the Damascus Symphony Orchestra and the Cairo Opera among others

One of my informants who has been living in Germany for several years told me how he believes the assimilation process in Germany for a musician like himself takes place in what he believes is a logical manner;

Informant: I think a wonderful thing about Germans is that they go protective about their culture, not by forcing you to adapt, but by setting a very strict and noticeable culture example. You know, there is a German culture, there is a German way of thinking, of eating, of behaving, and if you choose to be accepted in the society, or if you wish to be, you have to adapt. If you don't adapt you'll be neglected. I think that is fine. [...] I think it's logical. If you want to play Bach's music you have to either accept the way they play it and why, cause they have absolutely very logical reasons for why you have to play this music that way, they explain it to you; "This is how we play it." [...] If you want to impress people you have to understand this, and you have to adapt, otherwise you will play Bach and they will say: "You play Bach as a foreigner" and they will treat you as a foreigner.

Furthermore, the informant told me how this idea of what signifies *Germanness* was exactly what he believes is missing in his country of origin:

Informant: In my country of origin we have very many social problems [...]. For me as a classical musician it's really difficult to adapt there, because there's no musical tradition there. The musical tradition is very subjective, everybody has their own opinion and you have to have luck to get in or to fit in somewhere because there's nothing concrete that you have to do, there's nothing clear what they are searching for.

What makes this point interesting is the way this informant explains how moving to Germany has manifested his need for cultural belonging as a classical musician – something he gets in Germany and not in his country of origin. According to the informant, as a classical musician in Germany one is subjected to a set of

“unwritten rules” or “procedures” connected to what the informant calls German culture, namely the cultural heritage of composers like Wagner, Beethoven and Bach. By accepting these “rules” or “procedures,” the informant finds himself assimilated in Germany. This constructs an identity notion that negotiates his sense of national belonging to his country of origin. Wanting to be a professional classical musician with a place-connection to the music he performs, the informant might seem to have no other option than a negotiation of primary national identity, as his wishes in professional life are not coherent with the notions of national identity available in the Middle Eastern country he grew up in. As mentioned above, music creates or informs our sense of place (Stokes 1994: 3). According to the informant, for the Divan musicians moving to Europe in general and Germany in particular for musical reasons, music inhabits exactly this formative force of informing a sense of place, notwithstanding how it creates a new sense of place for the migrant musicians within Germany.

An inevitable result of the Divan musicians moving to Germany is that they no longer meet only in the Divan workshop and tour. As one of my informants said during a discussion about the purpose and core ideas of the Divan Orchestra:

Informant: If it weren't for this projects there are many people I would never get to work with and get to know [...] But now many of them and us are studying abroad, so we meet anyway.

The purpose of the Divan Orchestra, to create an arena for these young people to meet, is challenged by the Foundation's scholarships. Several musicians told me that they share apartments with other Divan musicians (regardless of country of origin) in Germany, and told me they believe this interaction was made possible through the Divan Orchestra and what they learned in the context of the Divan. Many musicians also called for more Divan activity throughout the year, wanting to make the orchestra a professional or half-professional orchestra, and argued that this is now possible because of the high amount of Divan members living in Germany.

The notion of *diaspora* is also interesting with regards to the musicians living in Germany. Through the Divan scholarship the musicians live and meet in Germany, they create social structures there, and what they have in common is not being from the Middle East, but rather being Divan members. In other words, they

create a Divan diaspora, where the notion of national identity is replaced with a mixture of Divan identity and a German national identity available to them through music.

5. The empowering Divan

*The performance and rehearsals [... of the Divan Orchestra]
had lasting effect on all participants
(Urbain 2008: 2)*

One of the most interesting moments for me as a fieldworker at the 2008 workshop was the wave of information I got from a number of musicians after an official discussion one evening. It was the fifth official day of the workshop, still three days to come before Barenboim arrived at the workshop. After having watched the film *“Route 181: Fragments of a Journey in Palestine-Israel,”* the musicians were invited to join the first official discussion of the 2008 workshop; a discussion of mixed identities that lead to a conversation of the key words *pain* and *suffering*, moderated by professor in literature Jacqueline Rose. The Israeli writer David Grossman and the Lebanese scholar and writer Elias Khoury were invited, and they presented and carried out a discussion based on their famous books (Khoury: “Yalo” and “Gate of the Sun”; and Grossman: “The Yellow Wind” and “The Book of Intimate Grammar”), both in which the “other” is included in a way that cannot be said to be common in the literature of either Arabs or Israelis.⁵⁰

Before entering the narrative of a newcomer and his experience with this discussion, I wish to clarify the strategy for the following chapter. Drawing knowledge from the previous chapters, this discussion aims to investigate the process of empowerment in the Divan, juxtaposing the actors of the orchestra as well as the music and the discussions, and what I later will introduce as the educational empowerment process and cultivation. I am primarily focusing on the *processes* taking place in the Divan, not the results of these processes, which will be dealt with in my conclusion. The discussion here takes as a starting point the

⁵⁰ Khoury’s book *Yalo* was controversial as it depicted a former military man accused of crimes during the civil war and portrayed the use of torture in the Lebanese judicial system. Khoury, Elias (2002): *Yalo*. New York: Archipelago Books.

Grossman’s book *The Yellow Wind* is a study of the Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories, which was met with controversy in Israel. Grossman, David (1988): *The Yellow Wind*. New York: Picador.

Both books have been translated to numerous languages.

quotation from Said saying that this is not a political project, neither is it a peace project; the aim is creating new relations based on equality and friendship (Said and Barsamian 2003: 34, see Chapter 2 in this thesis). In this chapter, I focus on the process of creating these relationships through music and discussions. Among other theories, I will introduce the reader to conflict transformation theory.⁵¹ Although this orchestra is, according to its founders, not a peace project, conflict transformation theories informs the discussion in an interesting way. Empowerment and cultivation should be understood as processes informing the negotiations taking place in the Divan in reference to the Middle East and not as a synonym for ‘negotiations’. By investigating these processes we are offered a stage for understanding the negotiations in the Divan. I wish also to refer to the theories of DeNora, calling for a sociology of emotions (DeNora 2001). We find here that the empowerment process is not taking place in what DeNora names “passion-less corridors” (2001: 163). By presenting the narrative of the emotional newcomer, I intend to give an example showing the necessity of a sociology of emotions.

The emotional newcomer

After a long discussion between the writers and moderator that shifted between being literary and political, the moderator opened the floor for questions. Many musicians participated in the discussion, asking questions related to literature and music, identity and politics. Throughout, the moderator tried to lead the audience and the writers towards an intellectual discussion of literature; however, political questions from the audience seemed unavoidable. Also the writers tended to include politically tense aspects in the discussions among the two of them, mainly related to their different view of the common history of Israelis and Palestinians. Even at a purely rhetorical level, politics seemed unavoidable; where Grossman used the names ‘Israel’ and ‘Palestine to be,’ Khoury used the terms ‘Israel,’ ‘Occupied territories’ and ‘Palestine.’ Although I will not undertake a discussion of these terms on either a theoretical nor a political level, I believe this example clearly illustrates how politics are unavoidable in the context of Divan discussions.

⁵¹ I am using the term *transformation* rather than the more traditional *resolution*. Lederach argues that transformation is more accurate because it engages the constructive efforts that include, and go beyond, the resolution of specific problems (Lederach 2003: 3-4). Also Johan Galtung emphasizes the need for transformation rather than resolution alone: “conflicts are part and parallel of the human lot,” he argues, “not to be avoided, but to be transformed” (Galtung 2000 cited in Urbain 2008: 4).

There was especially one newcomer who made a political comment; one that led to a long-lasting discussion the same night and the coming workshop days. This comment and the discussion that followed will be used in this chapter as a main example on how the musicians understand the empowerment process in the Divan Orchestra. First and foremost, this musician's comment was clearly an emotional outpour; he seemed nervous and he engaged personally in the debate rather than keeping the political 'distance' many of the returning musicians and the moderator called for. Some days later I had a conversation with the newcomer, where we talked about what had happened in the discussion. He explained it this way:

Informant: Well it was for me to drop a stone from my heart. [...] I felt better when I'd said what I said. It was very intense for me because I shared my personal experiences which I usually don't tell people. [...] And so I went to the room after the discussion; I stayed with myself and I did cry a lot that day. And it was very good, I felt very much relieved after that. It was good. Of course the things that he, the author that I addressed did not have any way to answer what I had said. He answered it quite foolishly actually, because he brought up political things all the time and when I told him "If you're going there..." I asked him some questions. And then he said, "You're going to politics" so, he says exactly what he did. But everybody who was there knew and felt that. At least I had my point to say, and it was important for me.

Openly, this musician told me how he saw this discussion as an emotional outpour, and how it meant a lot to express himself in this way. Nonetheless, the comment led to a divide between the musicians; the musician was supported by applause from his constituencies after he spoke, with the complete silence from the rest of the musicians. Afterwards, the musicians mingled around, discussing what had just happened. Here we return to my introductory remark; this was one of the most interesting moments for me in the field; I was contacted by numerous musicians who all in different ways felt the need to communicate to me what they thought had happened at the discussion and in one way or another attempt to modify what they thought was my impression of the discussion.

Generally, I found that the musicians who had participated at previous Divan workshops wanted to keep the discussions carried out in the workshops at a non-political level, whilst the newcomers went straight to the political questions. Furthermore, I found that for first-time debaters, the discussions often lead to an

emotional outpour, a need to express the narrative of the political reality seen from their side. In other words, rather than asking direct questions to the writers, the first-timers used this opportunity to express themselves, and criticizing the “other’s” lack of understanding. The above-mentioned newcomer was a clear example of this.

This divide between the returning and the newcomers was presented to me as a clear and even predictable aspect of the Divan. One of my informants told me how it is possible to recognize a newcomer from their behavior at the discussions:

Informant: When you go to the discussions you can tell who’s here for the first year. It’s very clear; it’s very obvious. People who get really upset [and] really nervous would be people coming here for the first time. And people that are calm, rational, probably giving rational answers, you know, people who tries to keep their nerves and who tries to really listen and understand and analyze, those would be people that have been coming here over and over again.

It seemed to me that the common accepted goal for the Divan workshop in the eyes of the musicians is to go through this process; be a newcomer and have your emotional outpour, and step by step “learn” to control your emotions, be more rational, listen to the others and analyze the answers you get. As one of my informants noted:

Informant: You can notice who is newcomers. This is not because the old members are not interested or as active in the discussion as others, but the old members are used to these discussions and used to the idea that if someone criticizes your country or actions made by your country, he’s not actually criticizing you personally.

Going through this process seemed to also be necessary in order to be accepted by the majority group, the returning musicians. As the above mentioned newcomer said to me:

Interviewer: Did you get any response from what you said?

Informant: Yes, I got very positive feedback from my constituencies and less positive response from all the rest. But, what did happen that was very interesting is that at least I started speaking with them after this, because they actually started debating with me, and continued doing so in the days to come. And that did help because got

to know each other. That did it actually. I understood that maybe the debate is not the important part but what comes after the debate. After speaking, after you show your point of view, then people start speaking.

Some of the returning musicians also told me that they found the discussion boring, simply because they had heard it before. By asking a pretty direct and possibly slightly offending question⁵² to one of the returning musicians, I understood how the returning musicians waited for the newcomers to get through the given first step – the heated discussion – and enter the stage where the “real discussion” takes place:

Interviewer: It seems like the newcomers get heated, whilst the musicians that have been here some years just lean back and say “Yes, yes, relax...”. Is this true?

Informant: No! It is not like we lean back. But we’ve heard this discussion before, and we are past the discussion of pain and suffering. We want to have the discussion that follows, the more “practical” discussion of what is going on. The newcomers have to heat up, and then they will come to this stadium too.

What we see here is an educational and empowering process the musicians are supposed to go through; a process the musicians present as obligatory or unavoidable. According to them, it is a process of leaving aside emotions connected to personal experience with political conflicts in the Middle East, and becoming ready to engage in an elevated discussion. As we will see later, what I have named an educational empowerment process can also be understood as a cultivation process; the two closely related but also in a constant negotiation.

This process is also important in the context the superior, new and shared Divan-identity. The process of empowerment is a central aspect of the negotiation towards a shared Divan-identity; it is only when having created a shared Divan identity the musicians have entered a state of mind where they can engage in a discussion of the expected intellectual, non-emotional level. Inasmuch as this process can be supported by conflict transformation theories as presented in the following section, there is a need to investigate the other actor’s ideas of empowerment in the Divan. This will also shed light upon the role of music in creating a similar process.

⁵² At least the informant signaled that she found the question offending or annoying.

Power struggles and empowerment control

“Music both helps a social entity to access reality, and prevents it from expressing itself through more political means,” Hennion argues (Hennion 2003: 85). In the following I wish to discuss the aspects that could be seen as preventing the musicians from expressing themselves through more political means. However, I wish to bear in mind the theories of postcolonial studies, where music is regarded as a political means that can be used as a political expression (for example see Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000 and Stokes 1994).

After the workshop-discussion many musicians told me how the newcomer’s outpour would not be possible if Barenboim was present at the workshop. In different ways, the musicians told me how they thought Barenboim controlled the narratives expressed by the musicians. The Israelis especially emphasized this aspect; Barenboim being left-wing oriented with regard to the Israeli politics did not, according to several informants, leave much room for a nuanced Israeli narrative to be presented in the Divan. As mentioned earlier, one of my Israeli informants told me how he usually saw himself as a left-wing in Israel, but by all the time being verbally attacked and confronted by the non-Israeli musicians, with the support of Barenboim, he felt the need to defend his country. By doing this, he never got to present a nuanced narrative, so the musician found himself upholding an artificial role of a politically right-wing-defender in the context of the Divan.

A look at the resolution made by the orchestra in 2006 related to the Israeli-Lebanon war, and furthermore the statements made by Barenboim in several occasions (among them the statement made in the Knesset after receiving the Wolf Prize for the Arts, as mentioned earlier) might suggest that the public presentation of the Divan Orchestra made by its founders and Foundation is notoriously critical of Israel. As Beckles Willson suggests, this effectively suggests two sides: Barenboim and his team (the Foundation and Barenboim’s closest co-workers) criticizing Israel, and Israeli players defending Israel (Beckles Willson 2009: 13). Obviously, this states an obstacle for hearing the ‘other’s’ narrative; and for the sake of the Israeli musicians, the narrative they get to present is not the narrative they originally wanted to present.

The above-mentioned musician defending Israel told me that if he had said anything after the discussion, it would be in Hebrew, thus only understandable for his fellow countrymen. Could it be that the narrative this musician get to present,

under the control of Barenboim, limits the musician's possibility for empowerment in the Divan? Rather than expressing himself freely, the musician was subjected to a control of political impact that he thought forced him to present a certain narrative, not representative of his personal, political, intellectual, and/or humanistic views and lived-experience.

It was not only the control of narratives that made the musicians believe that the discussion would be different if Barenboim were present. Fearing that they would not get a scholarship, or be re-invited to the next workshop, or more generally not be accepted as a musician by Barenboim, lead some orchestra members to fear expressing themselves in a way they thought Barenboim might not like. As one of my informants said: "Many people told me that they actually were afraid to speak when the maestro was present in the discussion."

Also the foundation exercised control to a certain extent among the orchestra musicians, and externally with the journalists. First and foremost, a number of musicians told me, half-talking and half-whispering, that the foundation rebuked the above-mentioned newcomer for his emotional outpouring at the discussion, as they thought this kind of behavior was not appropriate in the Divan context. Moreover, and as mentioned in Chapter 3, the foundation exercised control towards the journalists; the journalists were given access only to a select group of musicians to interview, and only given a limited amount of information directly from the foundation. By doing this, the foundation controlled the public image of the orchestra. Even literally image-control was exercised by the foundation; one of the European musicians in the orchestra informed me how he was always painted out of the picture of the Divan, either through a retouching, or by the TV cameras avoiding him. "It is because I don't look either Arab nor Israeli," he said.

Nonetheless, I believe the image the Foundation and Barenboim presents of the Divan-orchestra to the public focuses on the empowering role this project has for its musicians. Generally, the public image of the orchestra, as presented in numerous articles since 1999, presents the role of music in creating an atmosphere among the Divan-musicians that is rare given the Middle Eastern situation.⁵³ However, there is a difference and a constant negotiation between how the public presents the empowerment taking place in the Divan, informed by the Foundation and Barenboim, and how the musicians themselves relate to the empowerment

⁵³ See for example my introductory citations in Chapter 1.

process in the orchestra. For whereas the musicians hold on to an educational empowerment process linked to the verbal discussion in the orchestra, the empowerment process controlled by Barenboim and the Foundation is more of a *cultivation* process.⁵⁴ Drawing knowledge from my introductory remarks on the movement between humanity, culture, and politics, the term is useful when applied to how Barenboim and the foundation define the process of empowerment; it is a process created and aspired from the humanities of the orchestra. The cultivation is, according to them, characterized by notions of empowerment, however not including the political aspects of this process. Rather than going through a (among other) political process, Barenboim and the foundation call for a development based on shared human values, limiting the possibility for political outburst and directing all need for emotional expression into the music. This is one example of the traditional way of understanding the movement from humanity to culture to politics (as introduced in Chapter 1), where the politics has often been treated as the “p-word.” I return to this aspect in my conclusion.

The term ‘cultivation’ is, despite the non-political intension of Barenboim and the foundation, a term closely connected to the nation state and its civil society and the power relations therein. Cultivation may not be something we do to ourselves, it may also be done to, as Edensor writes (2002: 6). Furthermore, referring to Matthew Arnold as well as Schiller (ibid: 6-7):

This is done not least by the political state; in order for it to flourish it must inculcate in its citizens the proper sorts of spiritual disposition. [...] In a civil society, individuals live in a state of chronic antagonism, driven by opposing interests; but the state is that transcendent realm in which these divisions can be harmoniously reconciled.

⁵⁴ It is in my intention to use a term that is going in the direction of the German term *Bildung*, however, as this term has a variety of meanings, is used in different ways in different disciplines and different languages, and finally, it has political connotations the scope of this thesis does not allow an exploration of, I have chosen to use the term *Cultivation*.

Prange notes that the term ‘*bildung*’ is one of the words that “have had the privilege to be left untouched by translators as evidence of a special German language game, if not a German malaise, in any case a sort of national identity symbol” (Prange 2004: 1). Furthermore, he informs: “I have found as English equivalents to *Bildung* an impressive list of terms such as ‘formation’, ‘growth’, ‘shape’, ‘training’, ‘education’, ‘culture’; and ‘higher education’, ‘higher culture’, ‘refinement’, ‘good breeding’; and, correspondingly, in French: ‘culture’, ‘civilisation’, ‘formation’, ‘façonnement’, ‘discipline intellectuelle’. A vast array of words – too many to represent the very heart of what is implied when we use the term *bildung*, circumscriptions rather than a clear-cut definition” (ibid: 1-2).

Given the parallel between the orchestra as a civil society and the conductor and his co-actors as the nation leader, cultivation becomes interesting when we look at how the process of empowerment is foreseen by the musicians and controlled by the Foundation and Barenboim.

However, is not only in the verbal discussions there is a division between the actors' idea of this process. The difference is additionally much grounded in the actors' ideas of the role music plays in this process. Could it be that the verbal emotional outpour that the musicians see as an "obligatory" part of the Divan education process towards empowerment could also take place in the music making, through musical means?

The power of music

Barenboim and Said argue that what interest them is the "power of music" when the young Middle Eastern musicians gather to play (Barenboim and Said 2002: 7). In his BBC Reith Lectures 2006, Barenboim discusses this "power of music," arguing that music has the power to transform and improve the world: "It has the power to move us [...] Music allows us certain emotions or combination of emotions that are practically impossible in life without sound" (Barenboim 2006: BBC Radio Reith Lectures 2006, Lecture 5). Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 2, Barenboim argues that the power of music is a different form of power than power itself, because it contains not only control, but actual strength. These theories are much in line with theories on music as a tool in conflict transformation, which can be seen as an alternative naming of what I until now have called the "educational empowerment process." However, whereas it was the discussions that served as the tool in the educational process, what is dealt with here is music as a tool in a cultivation process.

According to Lederach, it is the power of music that makes it a possible tool in conflict transformation; it has the strength to move people and remind them of their shared humanity, which in turn contributes to healing and reconciliation (Lederach 2005: 154). The power of music then, can be understood as something that can influence, or even change people's behavior. In other words, music has the effect of cultivation. Music offers an alternative form of dialogue, as Barenboim puts it; music is, in his thinking, a 'universal language', the musician's abstract language of harmony (Barenboim 2006: BBC Radio Reith Lectures 2006, Lecture

4). Through use of this ‘universal language’ the workshop offers the musicians a chance to respect and understand each other, something which is less possible in the polarized world of the Middle East. At the Divan Orchestra’s web page, one can read the following (URL: <http://west-easterndivan.artists.warner.de/>):

An orchestra requires musicians to listen to each other; none should attempt to play louder than the next, they must respect and know each other. It is a song in praise of respect, of the effort to understand one another, something that is crucial to resolve a conflict that has no military solution.

The artistic process is very similar to the process of reconciliation in the way Lederach defines it; initially the process breaks beyond what can be rationally understood, and then “returns to a place that may analyze, think it through, and attach meaning to it” (Lederach 2005: 160). Through music, the dialogue and cooperation is elevated, and return to a “new place” characterized by respect and understanding. It is at this place one can attach meaning to the process.

The idea of music as a tool in conflict transformation, in this case the conflicts in the Middle East, is clearly formulated by Said and Barenboim in their analysis of the Divan Orchestra (Barenboim and Said 2002: 11):

If conflicts are one day to be solved, they are only going to be solved by contact between the warring parties. [...] I believe that in cultural matters – with literature and, even better, with music, because it doesn’t have to do with explicit ideas – we foster this kind of contact, it can only help people feel nearer to each other, and this is all.

What is at stake is to use a tool that can constitute an alternative relationship to the human relationships characterized by real-life problems (as in Lederach’s definition of conflict transformation, Lederach 2003: 14).⁵⁵ In the previous quotation, the understanding of music in conflict transformation is closely connected to an idea of possible relationships that can occur as a result of playing in an ensemble. According to the ideas put forward by Barenboim and Said, in the Divan Orchestra music is used to create relationships among the musicians, or to

⁵⁵ Also Small underlines the role of relationships. His term *musicking* implies that music is not a thing, but an activity – an activity that encompasses all musical activities, something that people do (Small 1998:2). At root, *musicking* is about the creation and performance of relationships, he writes (ibid: 10).

use Lederach's words: music is used as "a lens to see beyond the presenting problems toward the deeper patterns of relationship, including the context in which the conflict finds expression" (ibid: 10-11).

The relationships created in the Divan through music are the very essence of the conflict transformation process. The newly established relationships create social values and form sympathies and strong feelings of belonging (Jandt 2007:377). According to Jandt, "Music making in groups brings out the social dynamics of the group. Harmonies as well as strained relationships are brought to the front" (ibid). In other words, it is when the relationship is developed one is given the chance to negotiate the groups shared values and identity.⁵⁶ Here I want to return to the aspects dealt with in Chapter 4, where I argued that the Divan musicians both get an increased sense of national identity through playing in the Divan orchestra, and, paradoxically also negotiate their sense of national identity through for example using their musical skills to become German. The relationships created in the context of the Divan are, then, not only relationships among the musicians, but also relationships to the outside world. According to Small, the relationships created through music have the strength to be a transformative effect outside the group (Small 1998: 48).

The power to empower — or cultivate

Several writers emphasize the power of music in the social context it appears in. Stokes argues that the means by which groups define themselves through music "have to take into account the power relations which pertain between the groups defining and being defined" (Stokes 1994: 20). Keil and Feld argue that only through an increased focus on musical participation and mediation can we fully understand the participatory power of music (Keil and Feld [1994] 2005: 21, see also Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000: 38). In her discussion of music's social powers, DeNora writes (DeNora 2000: 161):

Perhaps music has the capacity to be socially powerful as a resource for agency because, as a way of happening that moves through time, it allows us, should we let latch on to it, to engage in a kind of visceral communication with its perceived

⁵⁶ Also in the theories of community music therapy the strength of music to bridge gaps between individuals and communities is emphasized (Ruud 2006: 12).

properties.

In other words, all three writers argue in different ways that music and musical participation is powerful through the social structures it appears in, having a defining effect between groups and allowing political expression through non-political means. Given the definition of empowerment above, I will argue that all three writers acknowledge music's empowering effect. The question that follows should be: Who defines the process of empowerment in the Divan? What are the power relations between those defining power and those being defined by it?

Inasmuch as the ideas of Barenboim and Said on the power of music can be supported by theories of both conflict transformation, and also from the theories from outstanding musicologists and postcolonial theorists, my reading of the narratives presented by my informants suggests that the musicians do not recognize the power of music the same way they recognize the verbal discussions as a tool for empowerment. In the setting of the orchestra, they are flutists and violinists, whereas they are Syrians or Israelis etc. in the context of the discussions.

Cosmopolitanism, utopia and idolatry

If we are to understand the cultivation process of the orchestra and the power-relations defining this process, there is a need to explore the role of Barenboim through ideological, value-based means. When Barenboim states that he is at home "wherever he can play music" (Barenboim and Said 2002: 3), what he puts forward is an altered notion of belonging, one where place no longer matters, or one of cosmopolitanism. Barenboim has used nationality and national citizenship as a tactical political statement rather than a personal notion of belonging. In his book "A life in music," we read about his life in the many countries he has taken residence (Argentina, Israel, France, Germany etc), a history that in many ways reveals what is pure cosmopolitanism, namely the constant adding of identity notions informed by a wide range of places as well as spaces. As he writes in the chapter "European Intermezzo II" (Barenboim [1991] 2002: 15):

With all the admiration and affection I feel for many other ways of life, such as the Anglo-Saxon or the German, I find the Latin quality of attaching importance to very simple things, such as the midday meal, very attractive. [...] And I identify to an

extent with that purely Spanish trait of quixotism – not that I, like Don Quixote, what to fight windmills – but I have a certain respect for things that stem from the realm of fantasy and imagination. I can identify with the texts of Verdi's operas or Mozart's da Ponte operas, which I think I might not have if I had grown up in Vienna, New York or London.

This quotation is interesting in the way it shows how Barenboim - with his multiplicity of backgrounds - adds a wide range of notions to his individual identity, and furthermore how he, given his background finds that specific notions of identity are available to him. At first glance, it might seem like the identity shopping Barenboim is doing is a pure example of what many scholars have named "free-floating identity" (for example see Hawkins 2002). However, the cosmopolitanism of Barenboim is also one with clear lines to Eurocentrism, namely his tendency to both appreciate and identify with notions holding strong European connotations, the prior example to be the music Barenboim had made a living of playing and conducting.

What makes the story of this one person so interesting in the context of the Divan Orchestra that it is included in so many various discussions in this thesis, and among them the discussion of empowerment? In one of her articles on the Divan Orchestra, Beckles Willson points out the musicians' *idolatry* of Barenboim, making links to various religious connotations of the idol (2007: 16):

As a religious object viewed from within the Christian, Judaic or Muslim tradition, the idol is not only sacrilegious, but also theoretically contradictory, for it gives visible and tangible material form to something that is by definition unearthly and invisible. But in Buddhism and Hinduism idols pose no contradiction, for they are earthly objects in which a deity is present. So Barenboim: he is accessible to the players in many ways (not only is he present at their rehearsals, but also shares many social events with them over a period of weeks); yet his musical capacities and professional standing render him distant, and his very physical disposition is understood as marking his occupation of another dimension of existence.

Further, Beckles Willson writes that Barenboim's position as idol explains the impact he has on arriving at a rehearsal, a remark I can confirm from my experience in Pilas summer 2008. On the day Barenboim was to come and lead his first tutti rehearsal of the 2008-workshop, several musicians told me they were nervous about having to play for Barenboim, and the general attitude of the

musicians was one of intense waiting, one of respect and; idolatry. When being lead by the assistant conductor the musicians expressed a laid-back attitude, but when Barenboim was present the atmosphere was characterized by heightened focus, the musicians willing to learn, listen and perform at the highest level possible.

It is this idolatry that allows Barenboim and, through him the foundation, to exercise “empowerment control,” defining a cultivation process informed by his personal experience, values and norms. The idolatry lays the groundwork for the musicians’ respect of Barenboim, it makes them want him to accept him, and allows Barenboim to lead the orchestra, both as the conductor and as the intellectual leader, in a certain direction, namely a kind of cosmopolitanism with “a touch of” Eurocentrism. The notion of cultivation Barenboim wants to offer through this project is not necessarily the same as the ideas of the musicians, however, the idolatry gives him the possibility to control the verbal empowerment process, and it gives him the possibility to focus on the role of music in a cultivation process rather than using the discussions as the main tool.

The ideas of Barenboim and Said on the power of music are much supported by the theories of music as a tool in conflict transformation, and also supported by postcolonial theories acknowledging music as a political expression. Nonetheless, the theories of Lederach and the ideas of Barenboim and Said differ on one central point; where Lederach writes about the relationships returning to a “new place” characterized by respect and understanding (Lederach 2005: 160), the idea of Barenboim and Said is to create a “space” of respect and understanding, the *utopia*, the quick definition being “a space without place.”⁵⁷ This call for utopia should be seen in light of the background of Said, and not the least the background of Barenboim; given the above definition of utopia there is an inevitable link between the notions of the utopia and the identity notions of cosmopolitanism.

In the interviews I carried out, I asked a sequence of questions (see interview guide in Chapter 2), however, I also emphasized allowing the informants to express what they had on their mind, and to give me the information they personally thought would be of interest to me. The final question I asked in each interview was if there was something the informant wanted to say more about, if

⁵⁷ This definition was used by Nicholas Cook in relation to the Divan (2008). The definition in the New Oxford American Dictionary is “an imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect” (New Oxford American Dictionary 2008: Utopia).

there was a question they thought I should have asked or if they had something on their mind. Interestingly, several informants emphasized the role of Barenboim in response to this last question; suggesting that I should ask if the project would be possible without Barenboim, or generally expressing what I would call their idolatry of Barenboim. As one of my informants said:

Interviewer: I want to ask you one last question, and this is if there is something you think I should have asked you or if there's something you'd like to say that I didn't ask you to?

Informant: I think this project with another person than Barenboim would not work. And I don't think many people think about it, but, with the help of God it will help at least 20 years more with him. I think the moment Barenboim will not be here, it will not work. I mean, Barenboim is a world man, you cannot say he's from Argentina or from Israel. You know he can speak to you in your own language, almost to anybody in the orchestra. And he's very open-minded, he has said some very drastic opinions in the past about both sides depending, but I think he's very centered to one side and to the other side. He has huge culture, I can't even imagine how big, and much knowledge about music and about all the cultures. So I think he's the centre where we all go and what makes all this stay. Without him this is a big catastrophe, with the discipline, with the ideas. When he needs to say "Basta" or when he says we need to be more polite when we express our opinions between fighters or get into a stupid fight between individuals or something, he has the power to stop us. I don't know anyone else that could do that. I know great conductors, but they don't have the personality to make this happen. So, I think one of your questions should be, no, could be "Do you think this project would be possible without Barenboim?" I mean, there is a lot of staff, people in the office and the people that is around him, but next to Barenboim everybody looks so transparent, so invisible. As the head chief of this project, can you imagine someone else than Barenboim?

This citation is interesting in many senses: firstly, the informant expresses how Barenboim being a cosmopolite ("He has a huge culture") creates a crucial condition for the Divan Orchestra. As she said, the fact that Barenboim can speak to almost all musicians involved allows Barenboim to lead the whole orchestra,

despite language obstacles.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the informant focuses on the strong leadership of Barenboim, where the statements she personally finds “drastic” are accepted in order to continue having Barenboim as a leader. In other words, the idolatry this musician expresses towards Barenboim is strong enough to legitimize a disregard of the political statements of Barenboim. The informant ends the sequence by stating, “Next to Barenboim everybody looks so transparent and invisible.” In my reading of this comment, what the musician is actually expressing is a tendency towards the Divan Orchestra, when all comes to an end, being a “one-man-project,” a project with a worshiped, omnipotent leader (See Beckles-Willson 2007: 17 for a similar discussion).

An interesting moment in my fieldwork was the discussion held in Oslo the day before the orchestra was to perform in the Opera House. Barenboim and Mariam Said sat in front of the orchestra musicians and opened the discussion by expressing what they in 1999 thought were the core ideas of the Divan project, and told the musicians how they thought the project had developed since 1999. The main development emphasized was the heightened level of the musicianship, and how the core of the project had turned from being the workshop (as it was in 1999) to being several weeks of touring (as in 2008). The aim was to open up discussion for the musicians ideas on how the orchestra should develop in the future. Several ideas were brought up, mainly in two different categories. From the musicians living in Europe (Germany for the most part), the ideas went towards becoming a professional orchestra, arranging chamber music courses in between the workshops, and arranging more tours, in other words, ideas of professionalism coming from musicians building their personal, professional musical careers (many of them through the help of the Barenboim-Said Foundation, as presented earlier). From the musicians living in many of the Middle Eastern countries, the ideas tended towards more ideological efforts, among them carrying forward exchange through music education and teaching in the various countries, making commercials in the various countries in order to increase the awareness of the orchestra in the Middle East, and (in line with the ideas of Barenboim and Said) performing in the Middle Eastern countries.

The difference between these two groups was truly interesting, and could

⁵⁸ Barenboim speaks seven languages: Spanish, Hebrew, French, German, English, Russian and Italian. At the 2008-workshop, the musicians told me there is a rumor going that Barenboim is currently learning Arabic.

indeed have been allocated more space for discussion than possible given the scope of this thesis. However, in the context of empowerment and cosmopolitanism, this discussion was interesting in the way it showed how all musicians were openly asking Barenboim what he thought, addressing him once again as the omnipotent leader. Furthermore, several musicians emphasized the Divan Orchestra being a utopia, as one of the musicians said: “this projects shows that utopia is possible. Someone should record a video showing how we live in Pilas and show it to the world.” We see how the musicians, through the ideas of Barenboim, detach from the places that inform notions of a place-based identity, and replace them with space-notions. I asked earlier how the ideas of empowerment and cultivation are negotiated among the orchestra and its founders. The idolatry presented, informed by cosmopolitan values, is yet another binary that shows the complexity of this orchestra. Through the story of the emotional newcomer we saw how the musicians internally have created their own ideas of empowerment. However, these ideas differs from the ideas of Barenboim and the foundation, where it is the music that is regarded as the main tool for empowerment, and where the empowerment process is more of a cultivation process.

Notions of cosmopolitanism and a call for a utopia however challenge the musicians’ ideas, a challenge the musicians do not involve in as a result of their idolatry to Barenboim. For when the emotional newcomer was given a muzzle, the musicians’ own process of empowerment are put at stake, and all the newcomer dared to say in the final discussion in Oslo was the following:

Informant: I came to the orchestra with strong opinions, and I thought no one could change them; but it took three days. My understanding of the other side has increased. We are family.

Given these statements, it might seem like there in fact are no negotiations happening at all, as a result of the idolatry towards Barenboim. However, several musicians told me how the orchestra has changed their understanding of the other, how it has increased their respect and (important to many), how they have made new friendships through the Divan Orchestra. The complexity of the background of the musicians, and the politically complex condition for the orchestra’s existence is also reflected in the diverse ways the musicians and the Divan project itself achieves some sort of empowerment, be it through an emotional empowerment

process or a Barenboim-defined cultivation. One of my informants told me how she thought the “utopian republic of Divan” needs a certain amount of control-exercise:

Informant: In the utopia you need a lot of energy and flexibility, and in your mentality you need a lot of willingness. It’s a human error that we always want to be right. And I think even more in these countries, where there is so much hate and suffering, it’s not so easy to say “Ok, you’re right, but still I have my idea.”

I think this is the magic of this workshop, that everybody comes with a will, a very positive and open mind, wanting to flexible. Like in the discussions, you see it. Someone says “I don’t agree on this” and then someone else says “No, but look at this, and this and this”, and the person that didn’t agree says “Ah, ok. Perhaps I still have my own idea, but it was a very good point and I will think about it.” And this is the kind of attitude that makes this orchestra a utopia. It doesn’t work like this in the politics and among the politicians.

It is difficult to know if this comment was made of a result of idolatry towards Barenboim or if it is the personal opinion of the informant. Nonetheless, the informant’s argument is indeed interesting when it comes to the control and power of Barenboim and the Foundation, as well as the personal control (emotional discipline) required of the musicians in the educational empowerment process.

6. Concluding thoughts: the negotiating Divan

*Even the best society is not 100 percent pure. And I think it
shouldn't be, it's not heaven.
(Informant)*

With this final chapter I aim to reflect on some of the themes discussed in this thesis. Trying to sum up the findings from my fieldwork and my critical study of the Divan Orchestra is extremely challenging because the orchestra itself is a complex system of binaries in constant negotiation. Hence any attempt to arrive at one conclusion or one suggested direction would mean failing to account for the dynamics and the diversity of the orchestra. I have therefore made four different conclusions that work individually and together to help inform the binaries of the orchestra and how these are negotiated in reference to the Middle East, while at the same time clarifying my reading of the various issues involved.

By arriving at four conclusions I also intend to set the stage for further research. Several questions need to be raised, and a number of features are yet to be investigated in the context of the Divan. Before I enter my conclusion I wish to suggest some of them. Although they have, to a certain extent, been included in this thesis, terms like 'Eurocentrism' and 'Occidentalism' and their application in the Divan orchestra (as well as in the Middle East) are indeed important candidates for further research. Furthermore, research of identity aspects such as class and gender are indeed interesting in the context of the Divan. Musical cosmopolitanism, which is mentioned in this concluding chapter, still has a long way to go in the investigation of those canonical items that are assigned outside their national domain (see Stokes 2007 for a similar argument).

I have made the following four conclusions; a critical, a political, a humanistic, and a personal one. These conclusions are interdependent and must be read in combination, as they work to inform each other.

A critical conclusion

Based on the argument that there is a tendency to treat the category of “culture” as transparent and universal (and therefore the accommodation of culture as purely pragmatic), Middleton argues that the study of music as culture needs to be critical (Middleton 2003: 3).⁵⁹ My study of the Divan Orchestra should be understood as a critical study of a culture and the role that music and discussions play in creating this culture. We have seen how music can provide a tool for conflict transformation, and these are theories that are very much in line with Barenboim and Said’s ideas on the power of music. In the context of the Divan, a critical study of music as a tool suggests that we do not take the role and power of music for granted. However, we need to further analyze this role rather than let the power of music be reduced to the account of universalism only. Referring to recent musicological research, Cohen argues that musical traditions are more dissimilar than similar (Cohen 2008:27). “When we emphasize music’s universality,” she writes, “we might mislead ourselves into thinking that musical elements can be borrowed from here or there, without paying sufficient attention to distinct cultural meaning” (ibid: 26-27). For reasons of both ethics and efficacy, Cohen argues that music should not be dealt with as a universal language. She states that the “sensibilities, relationships, attitudes, historical resonances, etc.” that the musicians bring to the musical encounter contributes a large measure of its meaning (ibid: 28).

Towards this end we find that it is far from accurate to refer to the formation of social relationships among the Divan musicians in terms of music’s universality. Rather, the creation of a common identity and common social values occur because a negotiation takes place. Thus music *can* have a formative role in identity creation while at the same time embodying prior identities in its production. In other words, there is a reproduction of identities, both ‘new’ and ‘old’. The negotiations that this process entails are understood in terms of power and politics; take, for example, the notions of power that are appealed to in each of the Divan’s four conditions.

The first condition *is music*. As we learnt in Chapter 4, it is indeed relevant to investigate the musical leadership (in this case Barenboim) if we are to unveil the

⁵⁹ These thoughts derives from Cultural Studies; and Middleton is only one of the many Cultural Studies scholars calling for a critical study of music.

power mechanisms being carried out in the musical appropriation. Being the musical leader, Barenboim has the defining role in the musical expression of the orchestra. When we reject the impulse to read the Divan's music in terms of universalism, we are able to acknowledge and consider the distinct cultural meaning of the music's production, and can investigate the true power relations in that music. And, as we saw in my treatment of the 'Wagner taboo,' there are indeed power relations in music. The issue of cosmopolitanism is central here, and is one that I will return to later.

The Divan's second condition is the politically tense situation in the Middle East. I return to Cohen's argument that the national backgrounds included in the musical encounter each contribute to the meaning of the music. As we have seen, the musicians' backgrounds inform the narratives that they present and act as an individual's starting point from which s/he contributes to the negotiation of a new, common narrative. This narrative is then interpreted in the context of events in the Middle East. However, as we saw in my investigation entitled "Becoming German", the context of the Middle East may ultimately find itself juxtaposed with a new, European context. Only by carrying out a critical study of the Divan do we get to investigate the impact of this juxtaposition.

The core humanistic ideas and values as expressed by Barenboim and Said are the third condition of the Divan. My intention has been to investigate the musicians' experiences with the Divan, and as such this condition needs to be studied critically. Are the ideas of Barenboim and Said reflected in the musicians' ideas? The anecdote of the emotional newcomer shows a pull-and-push negotiation between Barenboim and his co-actors on the one side and the musicians on the other, with both parties attempting to resolve what the Divan actually signifies. Again we are dealing with notions of defining power. By comparing civil society and the orchestra with state leadership and Barenboim, I found that the orchestra's empowerment or cultivation process is informed by political ideas and practice. Despite the differences between the orchestra's musicians and its leadership, the students' idolatry allows Barenboim to undertake an authoritative position in this process. But to what extent are the musicians willing to compromise in order to play with Barenboim? And what are the long-term results of the empowerment process as defined by Barenboim?

The last condition of the group is that of nationality and, as I have argued throughout my work, this condition must be dealt with in relation to the conditions

of the Middle Eastern context. The nationality of the musicians may inform their primary sense of identity, and by this it may also inform their primary sense of loyalty. As I will argue in the forthcoming conclusions, the role and notion of cosmopolitanism is juxtaposed with the condition of nationality in the Divan, and may ultimately force the musicians to choose between the two, or otherwise choose between their country of origin and the Divan. For instance, when Barenboim's cosmopolitanism results in the group getting involved in political activities, some of his musicians may be forced into a position where they feel that they are betraying their country of origin.

In my introductory chapter I presented a link between culture and politics, and introduced Mulhern's term "the P-word", which he uses to suggest that politics are rarely considered in our investigation of culture. In the context of the Divan, when it comes to the public relations industry's typical representation of the orchestra, "the P-word" has not only been that of politics, but also a term that could refer to power. By focusing exclusively on equality, utopia and universalism, we may fail to notice that the Divan is also informed by a larger context of politics, culture and power. That said, even the "perfect world" (or a utopia) has elements of control, diversity and contrasts. Although it is a lengthy one, the following conversation that I had with one of my informants, points out exactly this:

Informant: People come here and see how we play, that it is of good quality. We have very good teachers, and we have both Arab and Israeli friends. But there's one thing that we need to remember, and that is that all these aspects does not mean that we agree on everything. It doesn't mean that we cannot see the problems in our countries. It doesn't mean that when we watch TV and watch the news and we see the massacres we say "Ok, I have friends from both fighting parts, so I shouldn't be angry." I mean, those thoughts will always be there. But how you deal with them, and go forward, that's the important part.

It's not a perfect world here in the Divan. Never. People think that "Oh, this is euphoria, this is the perfect world, this is a model of how it should be," but they see only the surface. If you want to know the real truth of everyone here you need to go into everyone's mind and see their thinking. Because you can fake so many things. When you see what everyone is thinking you will find that they might have opposite thoughts than yours. You can always try to be good and cover over your ugly feelings, but it doesn't mean that they don't exist anymore. The problems are still unsolved, and the conflict is still there, the war is always there. [...] All these problems are not solved yet, so this is maybe one tiny way to the solution. But it's not the perfect

world.

Interviewer: I read once that Barenboim said that the Divan Orchestra is a utopian republic. Do you think that he's going too far? Have I understood you correctly in asking this?

Informant: No, I think he's going too far. Now the Divan is the best thing, it's the best society you can find. For Arabs, Israelis, it's probably the best society you can find on Earth. But even this best society is not 100 percent pure. And I think it shouldn't be, it's not heaven.

Interviewer: And it's not necessarily dangerous, as you said...

Informant: Yes, I mean, yes, but it's dangerous to see it. Just to know that there are still black parts of the whole thing. That it's still going on.

These comments illustrate the need to allow for a critical study of projects commonly named 'utopias'. My informant's words also show that the Divan is in fact is more complicated than simply being a utopia, and that its music is far from universal. We learn that the Divan is characterized by its complexity and, as Barenboim would put it, these aspects are "inextricably linked." Could it be that a critical study of the Divan is the best - or even the only way - to let the musicians' narratives be the key focus and main source for information? Is it only through musicians such as the informant quoted above, that we can adopt an accurate understanding of the orchestra? By presenting and taking into account the voices of the musicians we get to unveil the complexities of the orchestra, which alone makes the narrative of the orchestra powerful.

A political conclusion

Barenboim argues that the Divan is not a political project. However in my research I have found examples of cultural as well as 'real' politics, demonstrating that although the orchestra is a non-political project, there is evidence that a political presence exists. Making a distinction between the internal and external elements of the orchestra by comparing the internal discourse between the two actors with the public discourse that surrounds the orchestra, we give ourselves an opportunity to discuss politics in a truly interesting way. It is, however, important

to clarify that the internal and external elements exist interdependently; that is, that one cannot exist without the other. In investigating the Divan, we are simultaneously drawn inward to the internal aspects and outward to the overall discourses in which the orchestra participates.

Inevitably, it is easier to address the way politics influences the orchestra's outer dimension, than it is to understand the role it plays on the group's internal organization. However, in my discussions of national identity and empowerment I found that both the inner and outer dimensions are affected by political elements, including 'real' and 'cultural' politics. The contrast between my findings and Barenboim and Said's public announcements about the group's non-politics is another example of the complexity of the orchestra. The orchestra exists because of politics and because of the politically troubled situation in the Middle East. On the other hand, the orchestra's founders argue that the Divan is not an alternative peace process. However, as we can see in the following comment, the founder's arguments only concern themselves with the inner aspects of the group. "The one thing that didn't happen was straight-out political fighting; there was an unwritten rule about that, at least so far as our evening discussions were concerned" Barenboim and Said stated, referring to the 1999 workshop (Barenboim and Said 2002: 8). There was no straight-out political fighting in the 2008 workshop either, however the narratives I have presented clearly show that the musicians' discussions had political significance.

The founders' withdrawal from discourse that occurs external to the orchestra may imply a fear of being politicized. On the other hand, it might be that this withdrawal makes the Divan possible. If the orchestra is non-political, the musicians do not have to clarify their political position or standpoint when applying for the workshop. Furthermore, Barenboim ensures his right to free speech by naming the Divan non-political. By asserting this position, he allows himself to focus solely on the Divan's music yet also allows himself make public announcements when he deems it necessary, but never has to answer to critics. The orchestra's very existence can also be understood as participating in an outside discourse; it is a non-political way of showing the world that there are greater possibilities than straight-out political fighting. Rather than fight, the orchestra plays music, and rather than ideology we see shared values negotiated by the musicians.

We have seen that, like the orchestra, Barenboim has made several public

announcements that have contributed to Middle Eastern discourse. The fact that his focus is on music rather than politics, no doubt strengthens Barenboim's position within this discourse. Establishing an orchestra in which the participants are chosen on the basis of their musical skills rather than their political standpoint gives Barenboim the opportunity to create a high-quality orchestra. This ensures an audience for the orchestra, drawn by both the music performed and the public statement made by the group's formation.

It is a political action to label or name something as being non-political. An unwillingness to participate in political discourse always implies a standpoint on politics. Mulhern's suggested difference between the state of being non-political and unpolitical is interesting when viewed in this context. He writes (as mentioned in footnote 12 in Chapter 2) (Mulhern 2000: 175):

Whereas 'non-political' denotes a stance of neutrality in relation to rival political interests [...] 'unpolitical' describes a posture of moral detachment (usually critical) from politics as a form of social relationship.

The term 'unpolitical' should be applied to the Divan more than it has been. This is not to say that Barenboim and Said oppose any kind of politics due to moral detachment, but rather that they are opposed to forming a social relationship between the young musicians from the Middle East in which the relationship is dependent on rival political interests. The state of being unpolitical could, ultimately, be the condition for the new, shared identity created in the Divan. However, as we saw in the narratives of empowerment, the musicians include politics in the process of empowerment. They do not fear discussing politics, and many of the orchestra members told me that in fact they are a part of the orchestra because of its political elements as well as the chance to make music. This suggests that there is a difference between the two actors in how they think of politics. Whereas Barenboim suggests that the non-politics (or unpolitics) can strengthen his empowerment project, the musicians view politics as part of the empowerment process, and hence they are taking into consideration the reciprocal movement between politics, culture and humanity. An interesting element in this context is the ways in which the musicians deal with the emotions that come as a result of their political engagement. To be an emotional newcomer seems to be the first step in this long, educational and empowering process. What follows is a condition

characterized by openness; the musicians create mechanisms to help them approach the political discussions with rationality and a willingness to listen, this is a result of greater knowledge and what I would call ‘emotional discipline.’ However this does not necessarily mean that those initial emotions that arose with the musician’s political engagement simply fade or disappear, as is illustrated by the earlier statement from one of my informants.

Could it be that the music is an alternative way for the musicians to express their emotions? When I asked about the 2006 workshop, when the Israel-Hezbollah war caused all but one Lebanese musician to stay home, one of my informants told me why he chose not to come. “I chose not to come that year. Especially because we were going to play Beethoven’s 9th Symphony,” he said, and told me how he found that playing Beethoven’s 9th was hypocritical and a betrayal when there was a war in his home country.⁶⁰

Barenboim’s decision to remain unpolitical ultimately functions to withdraw his project from the Middle East. One of the key differences in the way that the two actors define the empowerment process lies in the way each party allows politics to be part of the process. Rather than allowing the musicians confront the ways in which politics affects them and encourage them to discuss this experience with their fellow musicians, Barenboim and the Foundation have tried to control politically motivated outbursts. The emotional newcomer was muzzled. And, rather than being encouraged to return to the Middle East and share what they have learned during their time with the Divan, several musicians remain in Europe after the workshop and tour on scholarships funded by the Foundation. I have argued that these scholarships contribute to a negotiation of the musicians’ identity informed by the national. Barenboim and the Foundation make Western art music available to the musicians and offer scholarships for the musicians to study this music in the fortresses of Western art music. In my introduction, I wrote that there is a tendency to acknowledge the movement from humanity to culture to politics, and further investigation into this relationship has only strengthen my belief that this movement is far more reciprocal than is usually accounted for. For instance, Barenboim states that the group is unpolitical, replacing the politics with humanity (“It is a humanitarian project”). If we see only the initial movement, the

⁶⁰ The 2006 Divan performances of Beethoven’s 9th Symphony is dealt with in Beckles Willson’s paper “Whose Utopia” (2008), where she reflects on the use of “an iconic utopian work, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, in the context of its performances by West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, a by now iconic utopian ensemble” (Beckles Willson 2008).

Divan Orchestra is a movement from the values constituting the humanitarian objectives of the project (including Barenboim's humanitarian ideas) towards a shared identity and culture. Following this argument, it is only at this level that politics can be recognized. I believe, on the contrary, that there is *also* movement from politics to culture to humanity. Eagleton, from whom I derive many of these thoughts, suggests that it is political interests that usually govern cultural ones (Eagleton 2000: 7) and in doing so, they define a particular version of humanity. Rather than being a process from humanity to culture to politics, the real movement occurs in the opposite direction, he argues. From this perspective, we see that the empowerment process as well as the creation of identity and all negotiations that occur in the Divan, can be understood both as a human need *and* a political result. By failing to recognize the politics of the Divan we risk overlooking the possible effects and results that this project may have for its participants. As DeNora remarks (DeNora 2001: 175):

If music is a device of social ordering, if – in and through its manner of appropriation – it is a resource against which holding forms, templates and parameters of action and experience are forged, if it can be seen to have 'effects' upon bodies, hearts, and minds, then the matter of music in the social place is [...] an aesthetic-political matter.

As for Barenboim and his co-actors, it is important to remark that it is not only difficult, but ultimately it may even be detrimental to state that the Divan is an unpolitical project. By focusing on the empowerment process as has been defined by the musicians, it appears as if the actor in charge of this body believes that once their musicians have created a shared identity and tools for critical analysis, they are ready to participate in political discourse without having to consider the politics involved in their engagement. Politics governs the group's cultural and humanitarian interests; hence the activity of the Divan is already informed by political interests and may ultimately force the musicians to choose between the politics of their homeland and the politics of the Divan. The Wagner taboo is one example of this, the resolution of 2006 another; both cases have resulted in some of the Divan's members feeling as if they were betraying their country of origin.⁶¹

⁶¹ see Beckles Willson 2009 for a thorough analysis of the 2006-workshop, including the resolution, furthermore Appendix 1 for resolution (in German).

So how do we interpret this movement in relation to the last part of my initial question, which specified, “in reference to the Middle East?”

A humanistic conclusion

When Barenboim argues that this project is a humanistic one, we could interpret this in at least two ways. It could either be understood in terms of aid; that the Divan is a humanitarian aid project, or on the other hand it could be regarded as a project founded on human compassion and humane values. Both interpretations are seen to be correct when applied to the narratives I have presented in this thesis. As an aid project, the Divan offers a place and a utopian space for young Middle Eastern musicians to come, play, talk, and live. And from this, those who need it most and are suitably qualified are given the opportunity to move to Europe for a longer period of time. As an aid project, the Divan provides an alternative space for the Middle East.

Understood as a project that has human compassion as its core value, the Divan Orchestra could be said to be a project that focuses on individual development through a common passion for music. This is the intention of Barenboim and Said; they wanted to see what would happen if they brought Middle Eastern people together and focused on working the group into a coherent orchestra. I have two concluding remarks to make on the matter of humanism.

The first remark is that of musical cosmopolitanism, in spite of it being an unwieldy tool for analysis (See Stokes 2007). Stokes states (2007: 6):

Musical cosmopolitanism invites us to investigate how people in specific places and at specific times have embraced the music of others, and how, in doing so, they have enabled music styles and musical ideas, musician and musical instruments to circulate (globally) in a particular way.

Stokes is calling for the implementation of cosmopolitanism as a tool to analyze musical usage, while also drawing knowledge from theories within postcolonial studies. This allows us to investigate how prior identities are embodied in music as well as acknowledging the formative role music plays in identity creation. In the Divan, Western art music is used as if it were musical cosmopolitanism. In this thesis, I hope to have shown that the Divan juxtaposes notions of identity. The ideas of Barenboim and Said do not acknowledge that identities can be competing

or juxtaposing, simply by arguing that “the sense of belonging to different cultures can only be enriching” (Barenboim and Said 2002: 6). By being a cosmopolite, in music as well as in life, Barenboim is free to use music in the Divan as he wishes, without considering how this may contribute to a situation where identities are juxtaposed. Stokes again (2007: 6):

It takes a musical cosmopolitan [...] to develop a musical nationalism, to successfully assert its authenticity in a sea of competing nationalisms and authenticities. Turino and others (see also Regev 2007) see nationalism and cosmopolitanism as mutually constructing and reinforcing processes in a global musical field.

Through the combination of music, the empowerment process and identity creation, musicians in the Divan do not become cosmopolitans, but instead become German. It takes a musical cosmopolitan to develop a musical nationalism, but it also takes a cosmopolitan to render this as cosmopolitanism rather than nationalism. For young Middle Eastern musicians who are recruited into the orchestra chiefly because of their national backgrounds (as well as their musical skills), it must be challenging to read the ideas of Barenboim and undergo his program in the belief that his ideas are cosmopolitan, rather than European nationalism or Eurocentrism. This is a complicated paradox for the orchestra.

My second remark concerns symbolism and practice, matters closely related to internal and external notions of politics, as well as humanitarian notions of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. There is a tendency to treat the Divan Orchestra and its use of music as a symbol of hope for the strained relations in the Middle East, as we saw in the epigraph in Chapter 1. What has given the Divan the role of a symbol is based on the *ideas* that constitute the orchestra; namely that there is music, and young people from the Middle East, and that apparently, they do not fight. These are ideas the audience receives from the media and press, and from public announcements made by Barenboim. I have shown that it is not as simple as that; there are constant negotiations taking place in the Divan, which ultimately results in a complex and sometimes paradoxical system of binaries and contradictions. In sum, we are investigating a project where there is a gap between symbolism and practice. The question that must be asked is: How serious is this gap?

This is a gap that must be taken seriously, just as the necessity to carry out a

critical study of projects of this kind. This gap might ultimately be a fundamental paradox for the orchestra. However, just as the practice of the orchestra needs to be taken seriously and critically studied, the symbolism the orchestra offers should not only be juxtaposed to the practice, but also be acknowledged. Note that there is also a humanism in the physical surroundings of the orchestra; the humanism of the audience. This orchestra makes the audience believe in the role power of music, or perhaps even believe in the possibility for of lasting peace in the Middle East. In other words, the symbolism of the orchestra offers *hope*, as does Barenboim. I believe that in spite of the gap between symbolism and practice, that this is an element of the orchestra's composition that needs to be taken seriously.

A personal conclusion

My first meeting with the Divan Orchestra was at a concert in Berlin in 2007. This was their final concert of the 2007 tour. My seat was at the back of the concert hall, making me more of an observer than a participant. The quality of the Divan's music was thrilling and at the end of the concert I joined the audience in applause that lasted for almost 45 minutes, during which Barenboim thanked every single musician for their participation.

The concert was a remarkable event for me. I had already started planning my study of the orchestra, so the chance to watch them play live was a wonderful opportunity. Until then, the only information I had about the group came from press releases and from the previously mentioned DVD "Knowledge is the Beginning". Based on what I had read and seen - and because I am interested in both the Middle East and music, - I saw the orchestra as a special way of gathering young people from the Middle East. Therefore the concert was an emotional experience for me; it gave me the a chance to see - in real life - that it *is* possible to have some sort of cooperation in spite of the divisions in the Middle East.

In the following year - between the Berlin concert and my fieldwork - I spent time reading, researching and discussing the orchestra, and prepared for my fieldwork. Little by little my initial enthusiasm was replaced by critiques, questions, and an eagerness to ask the musicians about their experiences with the Divan. As I wrote in the chapter on methodological considerations, before embarking on my fieldwork I attempted to be as open-minded as I possibly could.

At the workshop I met many wonderful musicians whose origins reached all

over the Middle East. They were very open and devoted themselves to giving me as much information as they possibly could, and many became friends of mine. The workshop was an experience best described with keywords such as emotions, enthusiasm, eagerness and curiosity and, more importantly, it made me apprehend the complex issues at play in the orchestra.

Following my fieldwork I have spent time analyzing my findings and writing. As I wrote in my preface, the current political situation in the Middle East has served as a reminder of the intricacy of the context that this orchestra exists within. Little by little, I have painted a broad picture of the orchestra, one that is based on my findings, analysis and readings from a range of theorists. Throughout my work, it has been important for me to create a text that is honest. By this I do not mean that I have avoided information that is untrue (or worse, a lie) but that I have been careful to convey the complexity of the orchestra as I experienced it, and as the musicians described it to me. The only truth I can ultimately write about the orchestra is exactly that of its complexity; the orchestra is filled with binaries in a constant negotiation informed by politics, power, humanity, and culture.

I would like to suggest a parallel between my experience and that of the musicians. My cultural background is not Middle Eastern, I am not an orchestra musician and I did not attend the Divan Orchestra's 2008 workshop to express my own narrative (I was there to listen to theirs), however there is a parallel in the emotional and empowering process as defined by the musicians, and the process that I personally have gone through as a researcher. I went from being eager to get to know and understand the orchestra, to being critical and developing tools to investigate the negotiations taking place in the Divan with regard to the Middle East. I have faced several obstacles and dealt with delicate matters of power and politics both in the forefront and in the shadows of the orchestra. On occasion I have felt that I needed to choose between my ideas, the musicians' ideas and Barenboim's. However, I believe this is not how research needs to operate. It must, and indeed should, be possible to juxtapose, question and even criticize while maintaining mutual respect, admiration and tolerance. The Divan Orchestra is a project founded on the aim to make a difference and do something that is genuinely good. Some may call this a utopian republic. I would not go that far. All the same, if we are to recognize the Divan as a utopia we should think about the comment from one of my informants: "Even this best society is not 100 percent pure. And I think it shouldn't be, it's not heaven."

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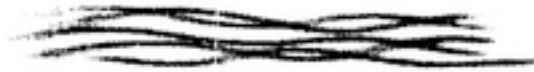
Correspondence

Letter from NSD dated June 25, 2008

E-mail from Ana Juliá, Barenboim-Said Foundation, sent January 16, 2008

Appendix 1: Divan resolution, 2006

West - Eastern - Divan



Erklärung

8. August 2006

Das West-Eastern Divan Orchestra verkörpert eine humanitäre Idee. Seine Existenz wurde zu einem Anliegen für Edward Said und Daniel Barenboim, denn durch das Orchester werden ihre Ideale mit Leben erfüllt. Wir begreifen dies nicht als ein politisches Projekt, sondern als ein Forum, in dem junge Menschen aus Israel, Palästina und anderen arabischen Ländern sich frei und offen äußern können, während sie zugleich die Erfahrungen anderer anhören. Dabei kommt es nicht unbedingt darauf an, die jeweils andere Erzählung zu akzeptieren oder der gar zuzustimmen; sondern auf die unumgängliche Notwendigkeit, ihre Legitimität zu akzeptieren.

Wir glauben nur an zwei absolut unerlässliche politische Grundsätze:

- Es gibt keine militärische Lösung für den Konflikt zwischen Israel und Palästina.
- Die Schicksale des israelischen und des palästinensischen Volkes sind untrennbar miteinander verbunden; sie müssen auf einem Grund und Boden koexistieren.

In diesem Jahr steht unser Projekt in scharfem Kontrast zu der Grausamkeit und Brutalität, die so vielen unschuldigen Zivilisten ein normales Leben und die Erfüllung ihrer Ideale und Träume unmöglich macht. Die Zerstörung von lebensnotwendiger Infrastruktur in Libanon und Gaza durch die israelische Regierung einerseits, die eine Million Menschen entwurzelt und unzählige zivile Opfer gefordert hat, sowie die willkürliche Bombardierung von Zivilisten im Norden Israels durch die Hisbollah andererseits unseren Vorstellungen diametral entgegen. Ebenso widersprechen die Ablehnung einer sofortigen Waffenruhe und die Verweigerung der Aufnahme von Verhandlungen zu einer umfassenden und endgültigen Lösung des Konflikts dem Sinn unseres Projektes zutiefst.

Die Musik macht das West-Eastern-Divan-Projekt möglich, weil sie – anders als Worte – keine einengenden Begrifflichkeiten beinhaltet. Wie eine Schule des Lebens, vermag Musik uns andere Wege zu denken aufzuzeigen; in der Musik kennen und akzeptieren wir die Hierarchie eines übergeordneten Themas; akzeptieren auch die ständige Präsenz eines Gegensatzes und manchmal sogar die von subversiven Begleitrhythmen. Wir, die Mitglieder des Orchesters, möchten uns, unabhängig von unserer Herkunft, als Pioniere einer

neuen Denkungsart für den Nahen Osten begreifen. Unser Projekt wird vielleicht nicht die Welt verändern, ist aber ein wichtiger Schritt nach vorne.

14. August 2006

Heute erhalten wir mit Erleichterung die Nachricht vom Waffenstillstand. Wir hoffen inständig, dass dieser eingehalten wird und dass er den ersten Schritt zu einer vollständigen Lösung des Konfliktes bilden wird.

